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ARTICLE

Team–Work: The Olympics 1925 and 1931

Ulrich Lehmann

The New School, 2 West 13th Street, New York, NY 10012, USA
Email: lehmannu@newschool.edu

Introduction

For the cultural history of industrialized nations, particularly in the economies of the Global North, the period between 1890 and 1930 is associated with modernisms, as successive cultural movements that were formally innovative, highly subjective, yet also self-reflexive of their institutional and social functions. These movements proclaimed themselves as avant-garde; as cultural vanguards that visualize, materialize, and sound out abstract ideas in new artistic forms and practices. Many modernisms, from Futurism to social realism, regarded the human body as a performative projection plane for expansive ideas about movement and mobility, often conflating social reform with physical freedom, and mass action with political agency.

The socio-economic system of industrial capitalism had set out across the nineteenth century the advanced codification of the human body through new metrics of time and space, when physical movements began to be assessed within conditions of labor that maximized output, and where spaces created by property speculation had to be negotiated anew, having been converted from indigenous and common sites to individual ownership. Karl Marx, in the fifteenth chapter of *Capital*, connected the significance of innovation to labor time and to a sustained increase in surplus value that could be extracted from the workers' bodies.

> So soon as the gradually surging revolt of the working-class compelled Parliament to shorten compulsorily the hours of labor, and to begin by imposing a normal working-day on factories proper, so soon consequently as an increased production of surplus-value by the prolongation of the working-day was once for all put a stop to, from that moment capital threw itself with all its might into the production of relative surplus-value, by hastening on the further improvement of machinery.[1]

By situating innovation in tools, machinery and production methods not only within the capitalist imperative of sustaining relative surplus-value, and thereby increasing the potential for speculation and profit with it, but by historically tying it to the labor protests that resulted in regulating the working day and increasing leisure time, Marx's political economy can be applied to modernisms' representations of the human body. When labor time became a battle ground for social emancipation

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in the late nineteenth century, it was designated as either qualitative or quantitative. The hours liberated by workers' protests from the monolithic block of absolute labor-time, could be molded either into a form of undefined freedom—enjoying the absence of "work"—or sculpted into an organized form of communal exercise that aimed at increasing the worker's health: sport as meaningful action within working-class culture that connected the physical body to the body politic. Traditionally, sport was distinguished from free play as being governed by rules of competition, and thereby came to be administered by quasi-governmental bodies like the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which claims to be the sole gatekeeper to both the structure and the "spirit" of the Olympics. Innovation and the relative surplus-value that owners of the means of production gained from it were projected onto an emerging culture of sport in which capitalist forces aimed to draw profit from free physical movements. The question of control over and ownership of the body as a means of production in sport directs the following discussion.

To note: the gender of the body at work and leisure is significant to consider at the outset, as most women's labor does not cease upon leaving the workplace but continues as childcare and house work that, in its economic value, had not been analyzed until the 1960s by Marxist feminists. Men, in contrast, could exercise their leisure time much more easily outside the home, as they were much less constrained by social sanctions.

The workers' improvement of their body's health, the training to increase endurance and strength, offered a dialectic perspective on capitalism. Capitalist organizations could take the thesis of self-directed action of the workers' bodies as its antithesis: as a template for rewarding increased performance to accrue surplus-value. The more the worker trained and the better he (and, until the 1920s, very rarely she) performed in sporting competition, the greater the potential rewards; competitions were organized and participants selected to represent their nation states, performance records were documented, and medals awarded. Culture in modernism reflected on these newly constructed narratives of optimized performances within sporting rituals by designing new media, clothing, and accessories. In 1903, *L'Auto,* a French (nationalist, anti-Semitic) sports daily organized a cycle race as an annual national "tour," whose winner wore a jersey in the paper's color, and whose performance relied not only on innovative machinery aiding the body (novel road bikes that optimized the workers' habitual means of transport) but, almost in equal measure, on new artificial means that were used to stimulate (dope) the body itself.

It is important to understand Marx's political economy, as in the quote above, not as deterministic. New technologies do not always increase (relative) surplus-value and fall within a constant philosophy of progress; new technologies condition the environment and circumstances of life in industrial societies, and they thereby reveal social processes, which can be understood as radical new ideas. In performances of the body between 1890 and 1930, new ways of articulating the body shaped technologies to the same degree that new technologies shaped the understanding of the body. Drafting the sequence of physical movement in motion-capture photography in the 1890s or filming mass exercises and recording games or races for newsreels in the 1920s, allowed coaches to plot training regimes and develop new exercises. The athletes, photographed, for example, by Eadweard Muybridge in Menlo Park in the

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1880s, were able to track each section of their performance and correct position or motion to optimize their impact. Albert Londe and his twelve-lens camera, developed in 1891 at his laboratory at the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris, depicted the muscle-movements of body builders, so that their quest for geometric harmony of physical parts could be analyzed and shaped further. International football matches shown in 1920s-newsreels not only revealed innovative tactics in play but also introduced new fashions in gestures and movements (as well as sportswear).

In the visual language of modernisms between 1890 and 1930 the body moved between affects and systems, dialectically releasing the potential of the human subject as a self-articulating independent social entity that is constituent for the body's integration into larger, often dehumanizing, socio-economic structures, which in turn could be reformed by mass action. The need to identify the individual body within a mass of people becomes an operational principle for my discussion of team sport in modernism, when the individual achievement of a particularly talented athlete became a focus for narratives and images that at the same time emphasized the collective ethos—especially in the face of the increased professionalization of sport in this period that aimed at generating the aforementioned surplus value via material and physical innovation on the sporting stage.

Within the movement between affects and systems, gender roles were articulated in the eroticization of the female body in action, for instance, in the late 1920s-social

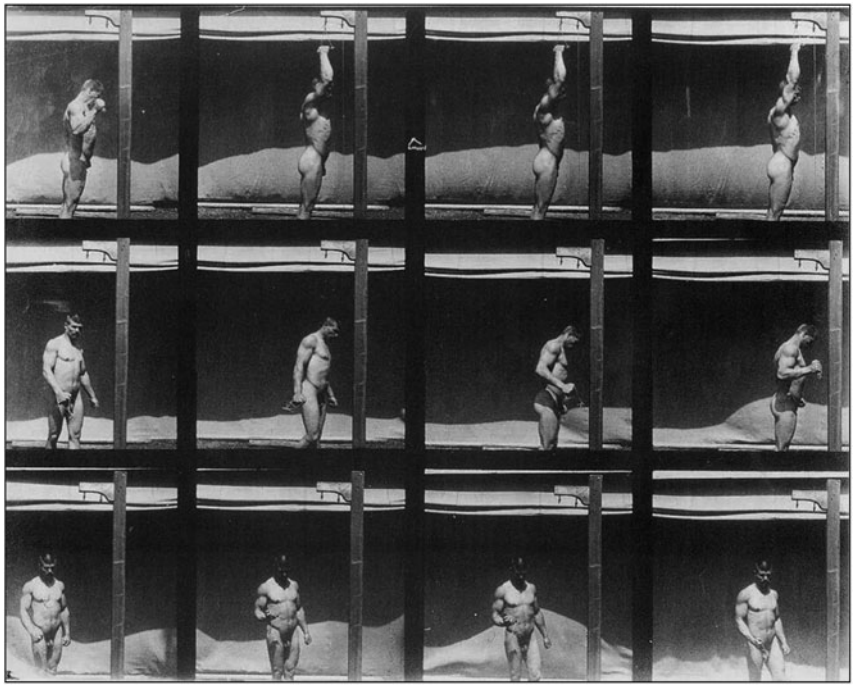


Figure 1: Albert Londe, *Pulling on a Cord (The Cord Breaks)*, from the series *Artistic Physiology of Man in Motion*, 1895.

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Figure 2: Lothar Rübelt, *Round Dance on Bicycles*, Viennese Labor Sport Association, ca. 1919.

realism of Aleksandr Deineka's paintings or Aleksandr Rodchenko's photos of the *Spartakiad*. Yet in equal measure a nongendered articulation of the physical potential of the body appeared in modernist designs by Thayaht or Vavara Stepanova and the pioneering sports photography by Lothar Rübelt.

Physical potential was shown as such; the new women and new men of such modernisms constituted an abstracted, universalized body (of people). This, in turn, encouraged new technical means to construct environments for a novel understanding of the body: new stadia, gymnasia, exercise machines (e.g., the "apparatus" in early 1920s-pilates), and innovatively machine-knitted textiles for sportswear. Marx had assessed the historical basis for this process in the 1860s:

> Technology also discovered the few main fundamental forms of motion, which, despite the diversity of the instruments used, are necessarily taken by every productive action of the human body; just as the science of mechanics sees in the most complicated machinery nothing but the continual repetition of the simple mechanical powers.[2]

Repetition would ensure that the potential of the body, as recorded by new technological means, generated an understanding of sport that fed the surplus-machine. Physical movements, enhanced by sustained exercise and fine-tuned within repeat performances on the training ground and during competition, mirrored the regularity of an optimized machinery. Yet, equally, the collective body of sportsmen and -women represented an idealized human performativity, based on our shared

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physiology that allows us all to synchronize harmonic physical movements. These movements were left originally without any markers of class, race, nationality, or gender—only to be instated in modern sporting competition by the likes of Pierre de Coubertin or Avery Brundage, the racist and sexist organizers of the bourgeois Olympic Games at the start of the twentieth century.

Training

Two Olympic Games of 1925 and 1931 serve as examples in the discussion of innovation and surplus-value, political action, and the collective exercising of class consciousness. These games are not the ones on official record at IOC's Lausanne headquarter nor were they held to promote national political interests. They were internationalist events of mass participation, to address the social conditions that modernist culture attempted to display and debate, and thereby became constituent parts in the formation of modern sport.

At least two grand manifestations of *arbeitersport* (workers' sport) surpassed in structure and size burgeoning bourgeois events. In 1925, the Sozialistische Arbeitersport Internationale (Socialist Labor Sport International, SASI) organized the first Workers' Olympics in Frankfurt a.M. and in the Riesengebirge, the mountain range between today's Poland and the Czech Republic. More than one hundred thousand active participants made it the largest participatory event in the history of sport, until it was surpassed in 1931 by some two hundred thousand people participating at the *2. Arbeiterolympiade* in Vienna and Mürzzuschlag (Styria). In preparation for the Workers' Olympics the organizing body published a new magazine, programmatically entitled *Olympiade*.

The four issues between July and October 1924 set the Workers' Olympics in contrast—conceptually, structurally, as well as organizationally—to Coubertin's restaging of antique narratives. Fritz Wildung, carpenter, social-democratic politician, and sports administrator from the 1890s onward, wrote in the second issue of the magazine:

> Our Olympic Games cannot simply appear as a martial sporting event [*Kampfsportveranstaltung*] like the bourgeois version of these games. Labor sport presents more than the simple work of muscles, it is an educational means that encompasses the human as a whole and it is destined to promote working class culture according to socialist principles. Although we are promoting body culture first, this culture of the body cannot be separated from human culture in general. The body culture of the worker in particular is socially determined to the greatest degree and completely bound up with social life. It is coined especially through conditions of labor within the process of production, as well as living conditions and nutrition.[3]

For the organizer in 1924, it was clear that the games in the following year could not feature passive spectators or paying consumers but needed to freely educate and train active participants in solidarity and physical proximity to each other. In order to integrate workers' sport into modern society and critically reflect modern conditions of labor, the sportswomen, -men and -children had to meet and educate each other

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OLYMPIADE

NUMMER 1 JULI 1924 JAHRGANG 1

Weltolympiade der Arbeit

Prag und Leipzig und die Feste der Belgier und Schweizer waren Etappen auf dem Wege zu dem offiziellen Arbeiterolympia in Frankfurt a. M., zu dem wir nun zu rüsten beginnen. Die genannten nationalen Veranstaltungen haben uns gestattet, das Maß unserer Kraft abzuschätzen und das Ergebnis war: Wir können es machen! In den Jubel der Leipziger Tage klang dann die Kunde, daß der internationale Kongreß beschlossen habe, im Jahre 1925 in Frankfurt a. M. das erste Olympia abzuhalten. Tausendfältig ertönte der Abschiedsgruß: Auf Wiedersehen in Frankfurt!

Seit jenen denkwürdigen Tagen hat die Welt viel Unglück und Not gesehen. Oftmals verloren wir den Glauben an die Möglichkeit, uns in Frankfurt treffen zu können. Ueberall triumphierte die Reaktion und ein verblendeter Nationalismus. Dann brach in England der erste Lichtstrahl durch den Nebel: Macdonald, ein treuer Sozialist, bildete in dem kapitalistischen Riesenimperium die erste sozialistische Arbeiterregierung. Nun hat auch Frankreich die Schmach des Bloc national getilgt, Dänemark ist dem englischen Beispiel gefolgt. Deutschland, das den Glauben an die Demokratie, dem es sich nach der Revolution aus vollem Herzen hingegeben hatte, verloren hat, verfiel zum Teil dem Nationalismus. Aber auch hier ist die Aussicht auf Gesundung vorhanden, sobald nur das schwere Problem der Reparation im Geiste der Versöhnung zu lösen versucht wird. Wir vertrauen der französischen Demokratie, die so glänzend aus dem letzten Wahlkampf hervorgegangen ist, daß sie uns hilft, den nationalistischen Haß zu überwinden, damit im Juli nächsten Jahres eine reinere Atmosphäre herrscht.

Unser Olympia soll der Welt Zeugnis ablegen, daß die sozialistische Arbeiterschaft den Glauben an die Internationale nicht verloren hat. Wohl haben die Giftgase des Weltkriegs vorübergehend auch uns den Blick getrübt und die Sinne umnebelt, aber den hehren Gedanken haben sie nicht austilgen können. Mächtiger denn je erhebt sich dieser Gedanke, Meere und Länder überspannend, erobert er sich die Welt. Und heißer denn je glüht er in den Herzen aller Menschen, die das Gute wollen. Wir wollen diesem Gedanken in Frank-

Internationale Konferenz Frankfurt a. M., April 1924. — Conférence internationale à Francfort s. M., Avril 1924.

Figure 3: Front page of the first issue of the workers' sport magazine *Olympiade*, July 1924.

about culture (of labor)—physically and intellectually. Synthetic educational tenets had to be developed for the body politic in tandem with the political mind. The *1. Arbeiterolympiade* in Frankfurt a.M.

> should become a vast presentation of the cultural ambitions of the international proletariat. No event is better suited to such ambitions than the Olympic Games

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> that amass people around the globe. Cultural events by the working class are unproductive when they occur behind closed doors and exclude the masses; they have to use the mass as protagonist and player [*Akteur*].[4]

The mass as a single composite *Akteur* is key for understanding modernisms dialectically. When many are distilled into one, the subjective is integrated into the (social) objective. Competitive sport, as well as dance, theatrical, or cinematic performances between 1890 and 1930, forcefully embodied the modernist cultural aspiration to integrate social reality into aesthetic visions. A focus on the body was designed to remove the distance between formal trope and social application. The body of the subject was primed to become an object of contemplation within cultural manifestations; but not simply part of a vast process of objectification, as images of parades and mass exercises might have suggested, but by rendering the subjects collectively conscious of themselves, of their shared physiological function, of action to animate new social structures. This was far from a subjective turning inward to protect the individual from social pressures, generated by economic or political power structures. Instead, the subject-as-object was seen as formally inventing a concrete understanding of the body.

The 1925 Workers' Olympics in Frankfurt a.M. was filmed by Wilhelm Prager under the title *Die Neue Großmacht* (*The New Great Power*).[5] Prager made physical performance a central theme for many of his films; his 1924 *Wege zu Kraft und Schönheit* (*Paths to Strength and Beauty*) pioneered a language in which the popular ethos of healthy body culture could be given a quasi-scientific analysis by capturing sporting action in abstract filmic sequences, often as slow-motion studies.



Figure 4: Wilhelm Prager, High jump in slow motion (28′ 24″) of *The New Great Power*, 1925.

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Prager fused expressionist narratives with modernist visual language, connecting old and new artistic movements and bridging popular and avant-garde cinema. The organizers' choice for documenting in moving images the action of the first Workers' Olympics therefore reflected the need for an expressive narrative in a progressive visual style, to underscore innovation as a driving force for the body in sport. Prager devised edits of *The New Great Power* as part of the newsreel in commercial cinemas, to be presented before the main feature and, in an extended format, as a promotional tool that could be distributed to international labor sport organizations, unions, and progressive social associations for screening at their national and local events.[6] These multiple applications prompted the need for a documentary narrative, which begins with an animation of Wilhelm Tank's cover illustration for the 1925commemorative publication,[7] where athletes climb a hill—their very own Mount Olympus—up from the industrial factory and workers' housing toward the stadium, urging the viewers to use the film "as spur and emulation."

We see a new ideal of the body, distinct from the object of exploitative labor conditions as well as from the classical vision of ancient athletes. The "first act" shows a bird's eye view of the new stadium complex—the largest in Germany at the time—that socialist-modernist Ernst May had designed as an integral part of his pioneering urban redevelopment of Frankfurt a.M. as a city for social inclusion and emancipating labor.[8] The grounds of the stadium had been used previously as a military shooting range, so inaugurating its redevelopment with an international workers event underscored the desire of the liberal left within the city's government to design an internationalist, civil urbanity for Frankfurt. Equally, the antimilitaristic opener served to dispel any misconception viewers might have when viewing mass exercises later on: these are not connected to military formations or maneuvers but provide training for a different form of social conflict.

In Prager's film the international sportswomen and -men arrive from afar, by diverse means of transport, to traverse the new cityscape of Frankfurt and show



Figure 5: Wilhelm Tank, Cover the commemorative publication for the First Workers' Olympics, 1925.

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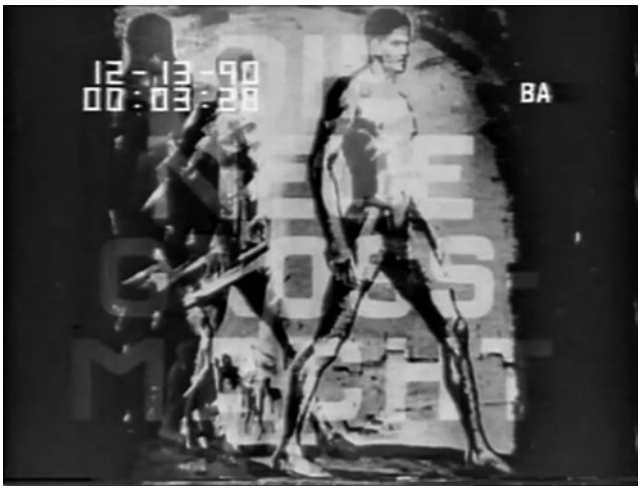


Figure 6: Wilhelm Prager, Opening sequence (0′ 16″) of *The New Great Power*, 1925.

the "new great power" of their highly trained body politic; the associate intertitle celebrates them thus as "living architecture." Yet the linear, visually progressive narrative of the masses and the environments they occupy is suddenly interrupted by a cinematic drama that shows two workers leaving the factory; one immediately enters an inn to drink, smoke, and gamble, while the other heads for his sporting ground to practice shot put at dusk. An intertitle of this expressionist interlude admonished "to avoid alcohol," yet equally, it reminded the audience that participants in the Workers' Olympics belonged to the working class and could only practice their sport at the end of a physically exhausting day. The film continues then on its documentary arc with



Figure 7: Wilhelm Prager, Opening sequence (0′ 30″) of *The New Great Power*, 1925.

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Figure 8: Wilhelm Prager, Aerial shot (3′ 47″) of the new stadium for the First Workers' Olympics in the *The New Great Power*, 1925.

head shots of athletes who are identified by their discipline and origin, presenting them as specimen of the participating collective rather than through individual names or achievements.

The events at the Frankfurt-Olympics documented physical excellence in tandem with international solidarity, where winners were named but no podiums or medals featured. At the bourgeois Summer Games of 1924, organized by Coubertin's coterie, just over 4 percent of participants were female, while almost one third of those entering the Waldstadium at the start of the 1925 Workers' Olympics were women.[9] In fact, the first world record set in Frankfurt was in the women's 4 x 100m relay race that bettered the time that had been set in a competition in 1922 by Great Britain.[10] Since records were not part of the discourse for worker's sport, there is no entry in the official archives of the Olympic movement, yet physical performance at workers' games were equal to those at bourgeois ones, although they differed significantly in the way they emerged. While bourgeois games had various organizations pre-select competitors who were sent as representatives of national cultures—thereby often excluding participants on grounds of gender and race—the first Labor Olympics asked all members of labor sports organizations to travel collectively to Frankfurt and decide who was to feature in select sporting disciplines and who would join together in mass exercises.

May's modernist monthly *Das Neue Frankfurt*, a "journal about challenges in redesigning culture" documented sport in a visual language akin to the large-format

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Figure 9: Wilhelm Prager, Expressionist dramatic interlude (19′ 12″) in *The New Great Power*, 1925.



Figure 10: French sportswomen at the First Workers' Olympics, 1925; local reports spoke about the infectious joy and passion of the group that prompted female spectators and athletes to spontaneously link arms and walk together.

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Soviet publication *USSR in Construction*, and both magazines bled images of mass exercises and team sports across pages and foldouts to literally expand on the meaning of sport as solidary emancipation of the body.

At the Frankfurt games all guests and locals were encouraged to become participants when leaving their collective quarters in the morning and join in the stadium for *Allgemeine Freiübungen* (Communal Free Exercises) to warm up for the day. Instructions for the mass exercises with their musical score had been distributed in advance through the third issue of the *Olympiade* (September 1924), entitled "The Olympic Games for the Masses." Such exercises were the principal language of workers' sport across the continent, from the social-democratic coinage of the Czechoslovakian *Sokol* (Red Falcon) movement during the 1890s, via the *Arbeiter-Turn- und Sportfest* in Basel 1921, to the *Fête de la jeunesse* in Lyon 1929,



Figure 11: Hans & Grete Leistikow, Front cover of *Das Neue Frankfurt* 4, no.1 (January 1930).

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and the five Soviet *Spartakiads* between 1928 and 1937, to formally unite and activate people with a shared class consciousness.

In his production of the film on the first Workers' Olympics, Prager was assisted by Leni Riefenstahl, who had also featured as actress in the *Paths to Strength and Beauty* film of the previous year. Riefenstahl would go on to convert between 1936 and 1938 the workers' mass exercises into rigidly automated patterns for *Olympia*, her film of the Nazi Games. The visual congruence of fascist body culture with the collectivism of mass exercises in the Workers' Olympics testifies to Marx's analysis of technology—in this case the multiple, repetitive cameras angles and dolly movements of Prager's and Riefenstahl's films—as discovering "the few main fundamental forms of motion, which … are necessarily taken by every productive action of the human body." The similarity and synchronicity of mass movements within the body politic allows for their ready transfer across socio-economic systems and political ideologies.[11] Modernisms' positivist perception of technology here allows formal innovation to move the body back into work. The visual character of the mass exercises abstracts and objectifies the subject through patterns in motion that become analogous to alienating movements within production. Dialectically, the freedom of the movement in solidary groups and antimilitaristic context contains its antithesis of the faceless member of a crowd, who is subjected to authoritarian commands.

Wildung predicted in 1924 that all modern stadia henceforth would comprise not only of ritual rounds for competition but equally of open spaces for the masses—not to consume but to engage—as "large, wide plains for free play and gymnastics."[12] The

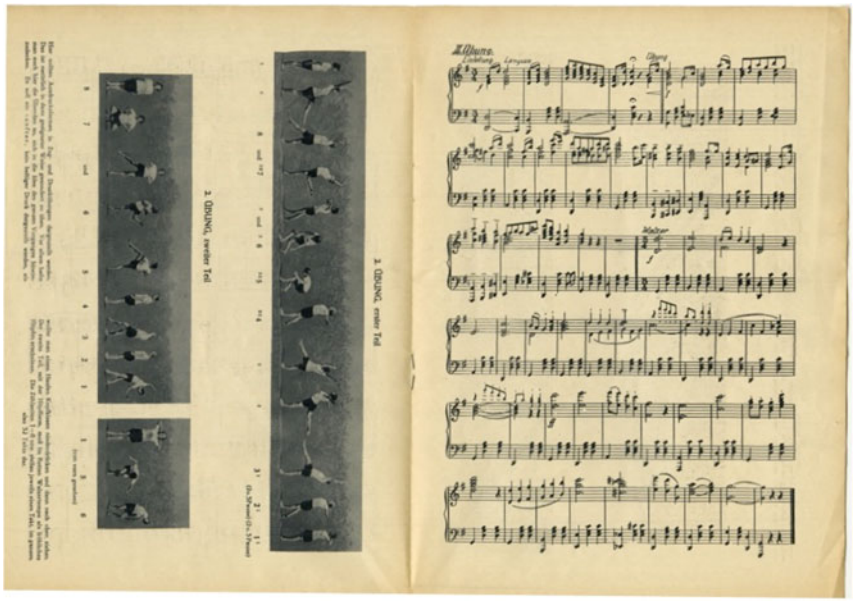


Figure 12: Mass exercises, *Olympiade*, no. 3 (September 1924): 8–9.

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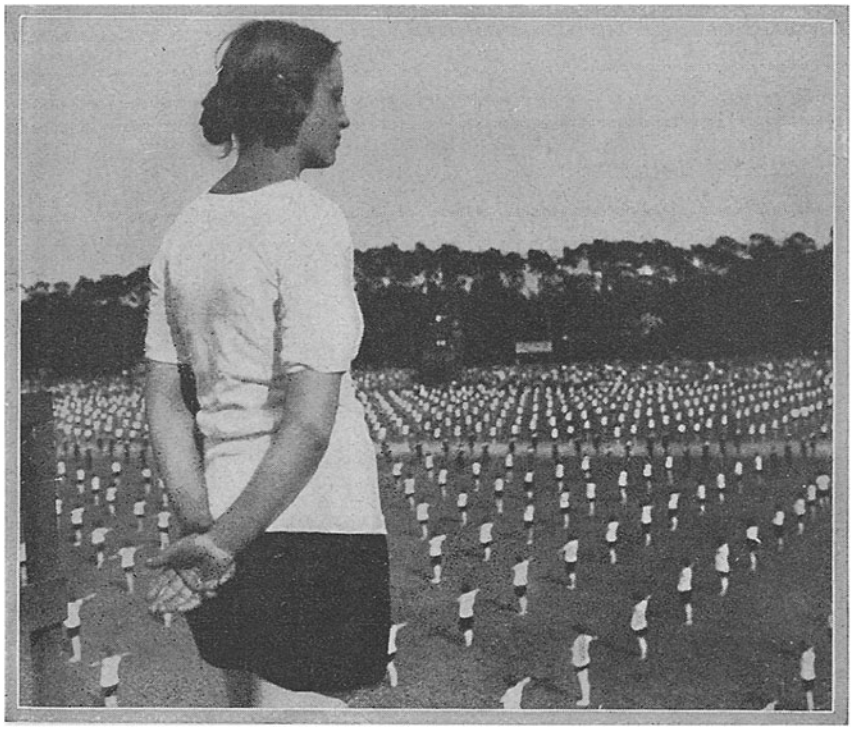


Figure 13: Perabo, Collective exercises for female athletes at the First Workers' Olympics, Frankfurt 1925.

vision was for labor sport not simply to oppose the bourgeois and nationalist Olympic games but to present a new set of ideals for workers' engagement around the world through an understanding of the body not exclusively as (resistant) subject of exploitation by the ruling class but as motor development of social change that needs to be trained and exercised collectively. Sport was the arena in which the working class could match itself to the ruling classes by essentializing physical prowess—something that bourgeois sports administrators, owners of media, and clubs had been trying to commodify and monetarize increasingly after 1900. The means of production in sport, which are not merely the performing bodies themselves but the channels that mediate and represent the performances, were corralled by the bourgeoisie via institutions like the IOC. It ruled that competitors between 1894 and 1971 adhere to "amateurism," preventing them from sharing in the surplus value and profit extracted from their bodies. In order to oppose the mapping of exploitative schemes from the workplace onto sport, workers organized themselves in exercising movements on the training grounds that were distinct from those of, e.g., manual labor in a factory, attempting to restore the natural function of their physique and engage in interactive play and games with others. The sites and forms for these actions came together in founding the SASI in Lucerne in 1920. The Austro-Marxist politician, unionist, and republican general in the Spanish Civil War Julius Deutsch became

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SASI's president in 1927, and the next Workers' Olympics were planned in his home town of Vienna as a radical performance event.

SASI's publishing house put out a commemorative journal in four languages (German, French, Czech, and the modern artifice of Esperanto) for the Second Workers' Olympics that showed—similar to Prager's film—the narrative of



Figure 14: F. Fröschl, Photomontage for the cover of the programme for the Second Workers' Olympics, 1931.

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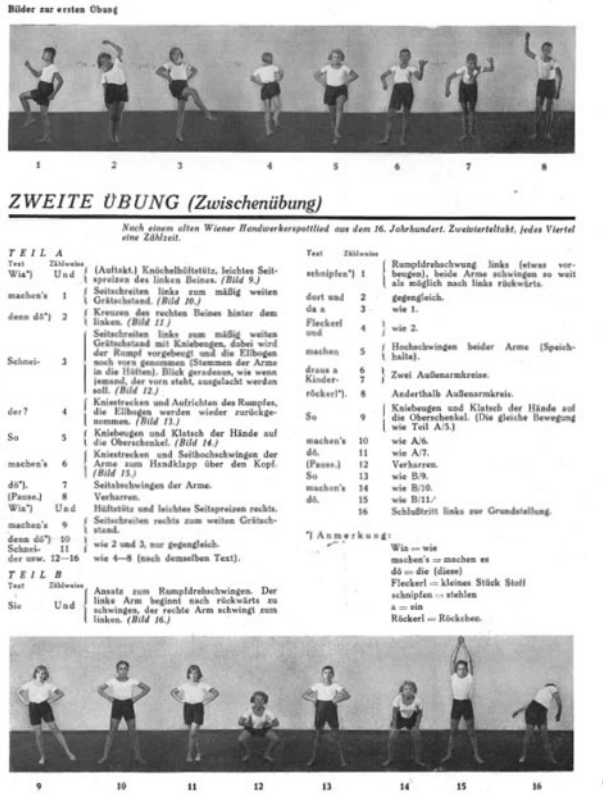


Figure 15: A. Brock, Girls' gymnastics on World Children's Day, July 19, 1931, reproduced in the programme for the Second Workers' Olympics.

participants arriving from across Europe (as well as from Palestine and the United States) in Vienna, and bedding down in communal lodgings, some of which had just been built as part of an extensive program for education and social housing under the aegis of mayor Karl Seitz. Following the reformist social principles of the Viennese city government the event opened with a "World Children's Day," accompanied by speeches expressing "love, pride and hope" for this new generation,[13] followed by communal exercises for kids and adults on Vienna's trotting race track.

These mass exercises were designed to equal in importance competitive events, and the organizing committee published in advance a large format booklet that contained the musical scores and horizontal photos of sequenced motion by gymnasts young and old, to assist local labor sport associations in preparing at home for the collective aspects of the Olympics. It also detailed how to obtain vinyl records of J.W. Ganglberger's musical scores that could be used for training—a internationalist communication that was ahead of its time.[14] The twenty-four-page pamphlet also contained schematic drawings of diving exercises and descriptions for the gymnastics competitions with six and nine events, assisting the participants' training and reducing the competitive elements by harmonizing serial movements. In white vests and dark shorts, children, women, and men in unison stretched their legs, rotated their torsi, and spread their arms in serial exercises that were devised—literally and metaphorically—to increase balance and co-ordination, warm-up all bodies for a day of sport, and create formal patterns of resonance between people. An image from 1931 by the Viennese photographic collective Pfitzner-Haus showed rows of women and men watching the events and awaiting their turn on the track or field. They are viewed from the back, minimally attired in dark shorts and white tops (vests, soft-collared shirts) as well as black bras. Their short haircuts and tanned skin speak the language of a modern sporting life in the open air, as a visual response to the cramped living and working conditions of their everyday existence. The 45° camera angle, monochromatic rhythm, and depiction of early "sportswear" rendered it part of the European visual history of modernisms; while its location and the simultaneity of its subjects as spectators and athletes positioned it at the vanguard of a radical social movement.

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Bilder zur ersten Übung

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

ZWEITE ÜBUNG (Zwischenübung)

Nach einem alten Wiener Handwerkerspottlied aus dem 16. Jahrhundert. Zweivierteltakt, jedes Viertel eine Zählzeit.

TEIL A

Text	Zählweise		Text	Zählweise	
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denn dö*)	2	Kreuzen des rechten Beines hinter dem linken. *(Bild 11.)*	da a	3	wie 1.
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der?	4	Kniestrecken und Aufrichten des Rumpfes, die Ellbogen werden wieder zurückgenommen. *(Bild 13.)*	machen	5	Hochschwingen beider Arme (Speichhalte).
So	5	Kniebeugen und Klatsch der Hände auf die Oberschenkel. *(Bild 14.)*	draus a Kinder-	6 7	Zwei Außenarmkreise.
machen's	6	Kniestrecken und Seithochschwingen der Arme zum Handklapp über den Kopf. *(Bild 15.)*	röckerl*).	8	Anderthalb Außenarmkreis.
dö*).	7	Seitabschwingen der Arme.	So	9	Kniebeugen und Klatsch der Hände auf die Oberschenkel. (Die gleiche Bewegung wie Teil A/5.)
(Pause.)	8	Verharren.	machen's	10	wie A/6.
Wia*)	Und	Hüftstütz und leichtes Seitspreizen rechts.	dö.	11	wie A/7.
machen's	9	Seitschreiten rechts zum weiten Grätschstand.	(Pause.)	12	Verharren.
denn dö*)	10	wie 2 und 3, nur gegengleich.	So	13	wie B/9.
Schnei-	11		machen's	14	wie B/10.
der usw.	12–16	wie 4–8 (nach demselben Text).	dö.	15	wie B/11.
				16	Schlußtritt links zur Grundstellung.

TEIL B

Text	Zählweise	
Sie	Und	Ansatz zum Rumpfdrehschwingen. Der linke Arm beginnt nach rückwärts zu schwingen, der rechte Arm schwingt zum linken. *(Bild 16.)*

*) Anmerkung:
Wia = wie
machen's = machen es
dö = die (diese)
Fleckerl = kleines Stück Stoff
schnipfen = stehlen
a = ein
Röckerl = Röckchen.

9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16

9

Figure 16: Mass exercises for children, reproduced in the programme for the Second Workers' Olympics, 1931.

"The rhythm of the mass exercises," declared the technical director of the SASI Karl Bühren,

> with its powerful chords, represents the clear will of the masses to protect the cultural good of the working class… No nations but women and men stand together, in different languages yet in brotherly and sisterly spirit. The exercises present the body language of the working class of different countries; they present symbolically the preparation for the tough battles ahead.[15]

In 1931, such a need for preparation to fight was more than prophetic, given the extermination of labor sport in Nazi Germany a couple of years later and its annexation of Austria in 1938 and the following year's invasion of Czechoslovakia, where the first Workers' Winter Games had been held. Communist and socialist sport organizers like world-renowned cyclist Teddy (Albert) Richter or gymnast Ernst Grube,[16] were among the first to be put in prison, tortured, and sent to extermination camps,[17] and the Lucerne-based SASI became radicalized beyond its social-democratic core to

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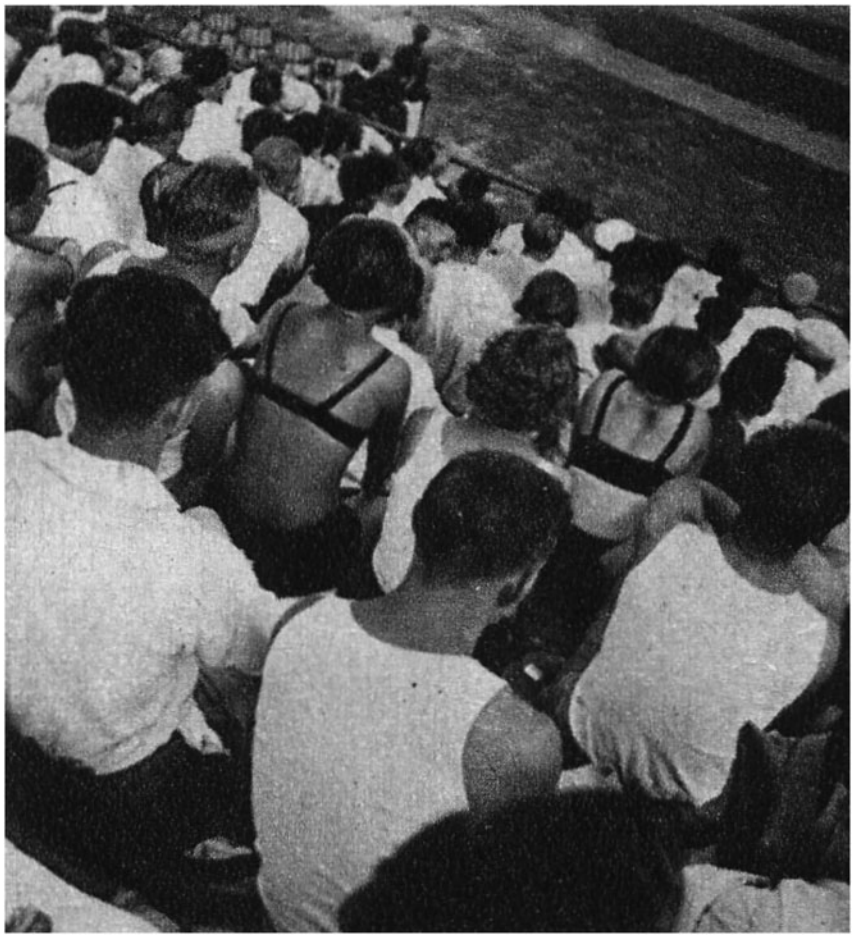


Figure 17: Pfitzner Haus, Spectators at the Second Labour Olympics, Vienna 1931.

join forces with the International Association of Red Sports and Gymnastics Associations, better known as the Sportintern or Red Sport International (RSI) that was founded back in 1921. The Third Workers' Olympics in Antwerp in 1937, which had originally been planned to take place in Barcelona from July 19 to 26, 1936, as Olimpiada Popular, to stand against the Nazi Olympics in Berlin, thus invited the Sportintern and other communist sport organizations to join a total of two hundred thousand participants. The RSI was organizing between 1928 and 1937 Spartakiads—named after the historic leader of the slave rebellion in the Roman Republic—to celebrate labor sport in the context of unions and army clubs. Education of body and mind became coupled demonstratively with militant pursuits, and some sporting exercises resembled military ones. In Vienna, Latvian teams won all the "defense-sport" events that featured relays in combat gear across obstacle courses. Martial as these competitive events appeared, especially in contrast

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to the mass exercises with children and adults of all genders on the fields next door, they demonstrated the desire for a combative approach toward political advocacy.

European bourgeois governments routinely denied the working class any concrete representation, and in the immediate aftermath of a global crisis of capitalism and an associated repression of alternative socio-economic systems, the 1931 games in Vienna, much as the smaller Berlin-Spartakiad of the same year that was outlawed by the German government, were designed as displays of labor power.[18] This labor

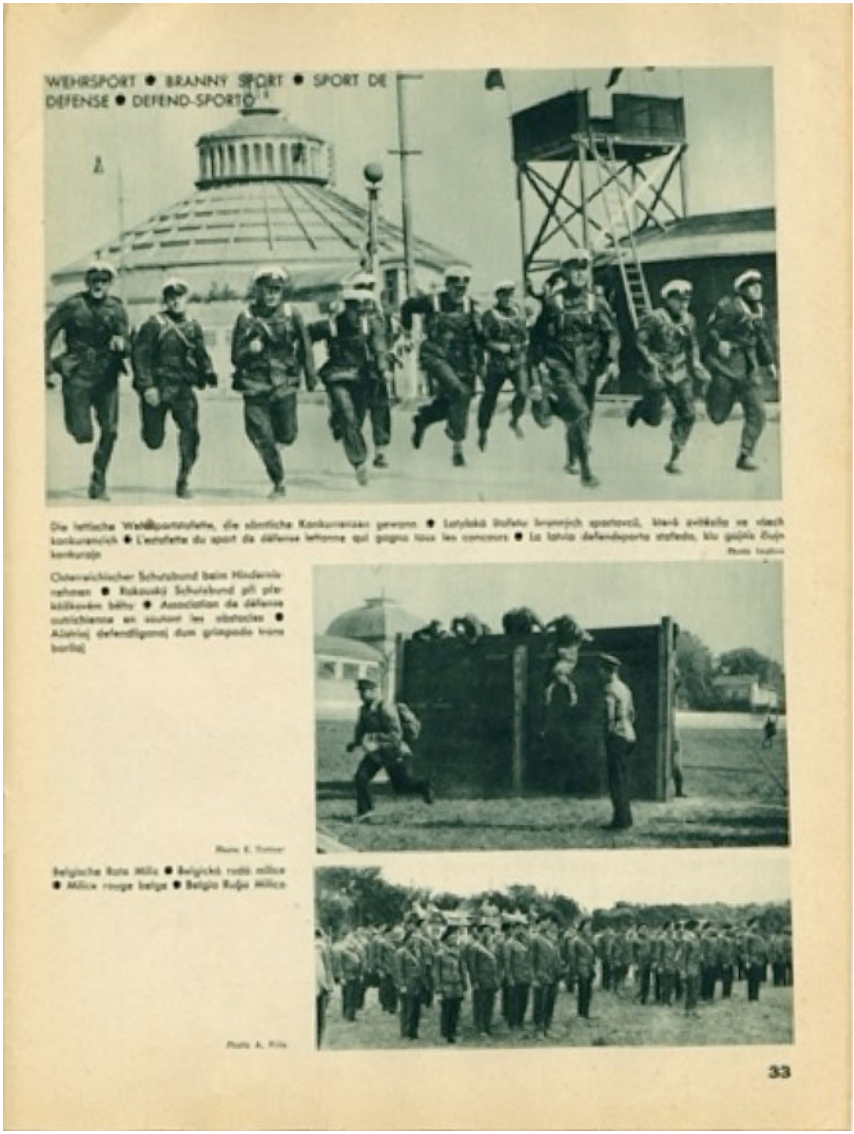


Figure 18: Defense sport, reproduced in the programme for the Second Workers' Olympics, 1931.

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power could not be corralled by oppressive legislation or pressed into the working day to produce surplus value, but propagated mass action—symbolically by thousands of participants exercising in the new Praterstadium, designed by Otto Ernst Schweizer for the second Workers' Olympics. The round held sixty thousand people, had the most advanced access points, and was located in Vienna's central park (the Prater). Next to it, the Stadionbad with Europe's largest swimming pool of four hundred thousand square meters was built, and both remain to this day in the care of the city as municipal, freely accessible sporting venues. It was no accident that such a demonstratively social-reformist building was converted and perverted by the Nazis in 1938, as an enormous holding pen for Jews and political prisoners before they were deported to the Buchenwald extermination camp.[19]

At the closing ceremony of the Second Workers' Olympics the Praterstadium became the stage for *Das Große Festspiel* (*The Great Festive Play*), an allegorical performance piece that showed the liberation of the working classes from the capitalist system through solidarity and mass action. The aforementioned dialectic of teamwork within a self-conscious collective and within an oppressive modern structure here exploded into mass exercises turned progressive political action. The festive play was devised by Robert Ehrenzweig, a trained chemist who had studied dramaturgy at Erwin Piscator's famed stage in Berlin, and became steeped in the methods of Epic theatre, pioneering the use of multimedia (film, radio), mixing popular and avant-garde cultures (cabaret, Dada), with a strong tendency towards education. As editor of the *Vorwärts* publishing house that would design documentation for the SASI, Ehrenzweig was well placed to produce the festive play for four thousand participants. Its public rehearsal and the final performance on Saturday, July 25, 1931, designed "with many new technologies" by the graphic designer and painter Walter Harnisch and Arnold Meisenmann, with music by Franz Leo Human/Erwin Leuchler, and directed by Stefan Hock, were seen by more than two hundred and sixty thousand spectators.[20]

Based on the rehearsed mass exercises at the Workers' Olympics, the performance moved from sport to dramatic play, maintaining formal urgency but also transposing—in a way that is typical for modernisms—the working bodies into aesthetic configuration. In the midst of the stadium a wooden platform carried a large coffer emblazoned with labels "the stock market," "capitalist," and "1000% [surplus/profit]." It was topped by a Janus-head symbolizing the duplicity of the industrial-military complex in capitalism. The opening sequences traced the history of exploitation of the workers from the European Middle Ages to Industrialization; early protests occur but they are crushed by a small group of white-coated soldiers with guns protecting the capitalist edifice, propelling the action toward the looming war and fascism; the voice-over intoned: "the number of prisoners rose from eight thousand to fourteen thousand… this year the profit of the arms industry is seventy-five million, compared with fifty-one million in the previous year."[21] Eventually, an ardent shout of "comrades" is heard and the masses arise: participants emerge from the audience, climb over seats and barriers and enter the playing field in unison. Their arms are raised over their heads and red flags flutter. A vast battle is staged with smoke flares and the sounds of explosions, while the participants are choreographed into formations who overcome the soldiers and tear down the structure; their victory

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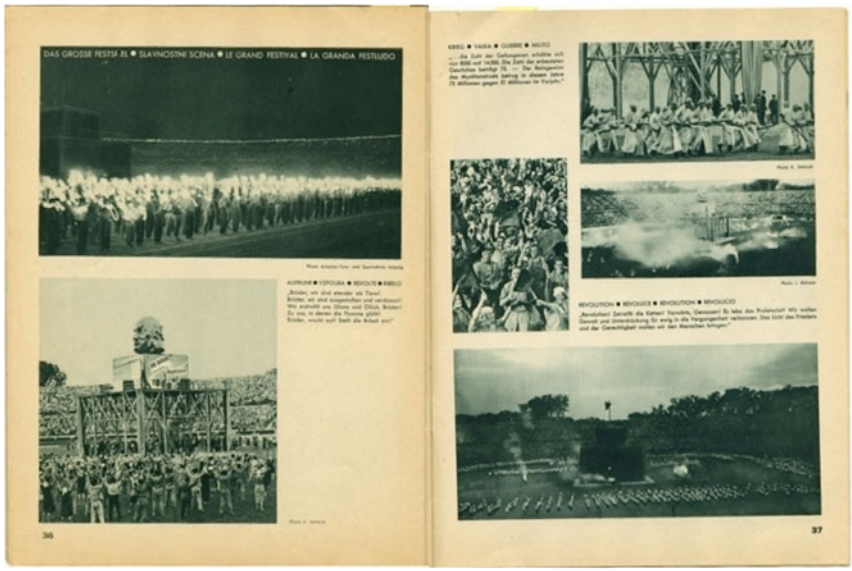


Figure 19: *The Great Festive Play*, reproduced in the programme for the Second Workers' Olympics, 1931.

ensured by collective will as much as physical superiority. This final part, entitled "revolution" intoned: "Long live the proletariat! Forever will we confine to the past violence and oppression. The light of peace and justice we'll bring to people."[22] Torches were lit in the falling dusk and all participants and spectators left the stadium together to walk in a huge procession through the Austrian capital.

Competing

Das Große Festspiel as "evolutionary history of work and the working class"[23] left no doubt as to the combined purpose of sport: physical education had to accompany and further a mental one, and training was not intended to yield quantifiable results in nationalist competition but to ready women and men for the fight against capitalists who would soon plunge Europe into another global war. The functional parallel between political and sporting conflicts, both on an organizational level as well as within individual events at the Workers' Olympics, was situated by Deutsch within a fundamentally reformist culture:

> The terms 'bourgeois sport' and 'workers' sport' do not only indicate political opposites, as some may think; they also indicate deep *factual* differences… Workers' sport is closely tied to the development of a *new proletarian culture*. It has made enormous contributions to the workers leaving the inns and going hiking in open nature instead. It has taught them to develop all parts of their bodies and to prevent injuries. It has provided them with courage and self-confidence and strengthened the belief in their own power, thereby also creating the necessary conditions for spiritual values. Rather than an innocent pleasure

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Figure 20: Photograph by Schmidt (Dresden) in Wagner, *Sport und Arbeitersport*, 1930.

> far from intellectual relevance, workers' sport is a means to elevate the working masses from a dull and pseudo-bourgeois existence to the radiating heights of real culture.[24]

The "real culture" became materialized in new stadia, communal housing, films, photographs, and graphic designs for the Workers' Olympics, moving away from the

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Figure 21: Photo-montage in the journal *USSR in Construction*, nos.7–8 (July/August 1934).

capitalist celebration of subjectivity and individual authorship to something dialectically modernist: within a culture that moves away from objects toward the subject resides the anti-subjective thesis of collective action. It was important that this action was to be sport; yet it was not a matter of merely adding it to a synthetic arena of culture, society, and economy in which the working class could oppose the ruling class, but to emphasize sport's singular significance. Since workers did not own or could not readily acquire means of production, commercial property, or self-governance, it was their own bodies and their exercise in open communal spaces over which they needed to retain control first. The body exists for itself and can be

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explored in its physical potential through abstracted structures, most appropriately in competitive performance or sporting contests. The limits of the body are not imposed by the subject or determined by the labor process; they are given in its physiological make-up only. The latter can be improved upon and perfected through exercise, while its movement can be optimized through training regimes and sporting practice. The objectification of the body can be turned from a negative—its exploitation within labor time for relative surplus value—into a positive—its abstraction as corporeal material, independent from subjective symbolism. Through sporting exercise, the body can become part of a collectivized machine, an original physiological means of production (of class consciousness) that is ideally kept independent from control of economic or political governance.

Conclusion

In his 1930 book *Arbeitersport* (*Workers Sport*) that collected ideas from the journal *Olympiade* and built on research into sporting history as well as physical culture and education, Wildung would focus on what he called "the mass-problem in sport." Facing a full-page photograph of the communal exercises at the Frankfurt Workers' Olympics, his text provides a contemporary snapshot of changing attitudes to mass participation, both from the athletes' and the organizers' perspective.

> The slogans 'No More Chasing Records! Long Live Sport for the Masses!' have gained much currency at present, even in bourgeois circles. Commercialized sport is in the doldrums right now. Audiences hungry for sensations have overindulged somewhat in sport and retreat with ennui. This in itself explains the change of opinion toward mass sport by bourgeois organizers, who are compelled thereby to approach the standpoint of workers' sport.[25]

The challenge, according to Wildung, was to define mass sport and explore which disciplines lend themselves to exercising not only in teams that compete with each other, as in football or relays in track and field, but as a real collective. Since the professionalization of modern sport was driving a focus on competitions rather than participation, mass sport needed to return to its roots in general physical education, initially at primary-school level, and fuse it with affordable leisure activities like hiking, kayaking, or swimming. The training for such mass sporting activity was not to be specialized nor arduous but offered all body types, genders, and age groups an opportunity to move together, away from their places of work, within free play and games. The ludic aspect structurally distinguishes mass sport from competitive sport as it combines the relaxation of the mind with exercising the body, rather than demanding utmost concentration in repetitive practice (akin to alienating work). Helmut Wagner, in his 1930 book *Sport und Arbeitersport*, concurred:

> The capitalists use sport in the same way in which they use another thousand things, which they apply to the workers, let loose on the workers, in order to draw them into the capitalist mindset. In sport capitalism gained vast new means to manipulate the masses. Sport is a modern means of the capitalist

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> indoctrination of the workers. On the one hand, sport, in a negative sense, captures the spirit of the workers and distracts them from class struggle and its goals. On the other hand, sport, in an oddly positive sense, induces the capitalist spirit into the workers' thoughts through striving for records and victory in competitions… This is the capitalist, political face of contemporary sport, its effect as weapon in the continuous suppression of the working class. Bourgeois sport is political in the most direct sense of the word.[26]

Wagner, a technical teacher in adult education and socialist, who in his American exile under the pseudonym of Rudolf Sprenger continued his training in sociology and anthropology in New York, was more radical than the social democrat Wildung—exemplified not only in his discourse on labor sport but equally in the modernist type font for his book that was set entirely in un-Germanic lower case and employed an innovative form of punctuation by Wilhelm Lesemann, instructor at the working-class design college in Bielefeld. Wagner draws a rhythmical line through his ultimate chapters "arbeitersport…," "…ist arbeiter massensport…," "ist arbeiter klassensport…" to arrive at a distinction between labor sport as collective activity for the class-conscious workers, part of the "real culture" that Deutsch saw emerging at the Vienna Olympics, and the mass sport in capitalism that was part of bourgeoning mass media.

Wagner built on Marx's work on technology and innovation, to reflect on the progressive alienation of labor:

> Rationalization to working people means the destruction of even the last vestige of any personal connection to labor. For the vast majority of workers skill sets and specialized knowledge, creative craft, and taking pride and joy in work, have no roles to play anymore. They are replaced by the mechanical gesture; its speed and rhythm determined by the speed and rhythm of the machine and the assembly line. Such mechanization militarizes work, yet not commanded by industrial sergeants but commanded by the stopwatch and machine. The worker becomes part of the machine, becomes the last chain in the technical organization of 'labor', while subjected to absurd levels of physical and mental strain.[27]

When modern sport mirrors the economic systems and labor structures of capitalism, it turns into an artificial conceit imposed on its participants—opposed to the free expression in play or games. When professional sport was developed for contemporary to cultural modernisms, its explosive expansion across all forms of media rendered it a structural given that was mapped onto existing dominant economic and political forms. Sport turns thereby from subjective activity (under certain rules of play, of course) into an objectified process that could be formalized and aestheticized. Under repetitive training regimes and materialist, even scientific rationale, sportswomen and -men function according to competitive principles and quantifiable achievement. Beating the opponent and setting a record becomes the *ultima ratio* of capitalist sport. Photographs, films, and paintings, as much as manuals, data collection, and record books, reify subjective performance into a system that reflects the economic principles of capitalism in structuring input and quantifying, implicitly maximizing, output.

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Yet sport holds a dialectic within itself; a shifting, flickering relationship between structural and economic aspects. Sport simultaneously echoes and denies the labor process and its structures. Its professional development is borne out of the separation of work and play as much as out of the extension of labor into leisure. Sport became a mass activity between 1890 and 1930 as its participation was extended from the upper class (the "sporting life" of "gentlemen") via bourgeoisie to the working class. New labor laws and industrial action in the industrialized West, which lead, for instance, to the eight-hour working day (e.g., 1918 in Germany, 1921 in France; cf. Marx's "compulsorily [shortened] hours of labor"), allowed workers to turn free time from the physiological necessity of relaxation into a sphere of meaningful activity that was to contrast the structured and objectified movement of their bodies during the working day. This redefinition of sporting activity through mass participation across classes—existing sports like football were redefined and extended, new sports like competitive cycling or basketball emerged—required new rules, new forms of social control. The organizational principles of capitalism turned sport into an industry with its innovative technical apparatus, mechanized rituals of competition, and competitive rates of pay. On an organizational level, industries began to take control of sporting clubs; the relationship between automotive manufacturers and professional football is here particularly poignant, with, e.g., Fiat (the Agnelli family) taking over Juventus Turin in 1923, or Jean-Pierre Peugeot forming the FC Sochaux-Montbéliard near Mulhouse in 1928.

At the same time sport is physical expression determined in an egalitarian fashion by aptitude, improvisation, tactical nous, even luck. Sport is exercised collectively within select sporting disciplines—team sports—and, when posited as a social activity, eschews the emphasis on subjective expression that is often profoundly bourgeois. Real life is introduced in sporting ritual through social interaction. Because of the complex social negotiation that lies at the heart of the success of a team, sport has to adapt societal structures to training and competition. Early examples, historically connected to much of the origin of modern sport in either boarding schools or military academies, had tended to favor strictly hierarchical structures whereby one leader directed his team. Yet much of modern sport, like football or cycling, promoted collectivism, in which individual team members would contribute distinctly to group performance and would take turns in assuming responsibility for directing the team. One of the main aspects in the political formation of workers' sport concerns this potential to move in and out of leadership positions, alternatively rising from and subordinating oneself to the team, and thereby both strengthening the collective and opposing the set organization of industrial labor. For instance, at the start of European football after the Great War, team managers and coaches were keen to promote collectivism, as it allowed them to vary tactics, substitute players from one game to the next, and adapt different formations to the respective dynamics throughout the match.[28] Conversely, an emphasis on the team ethos allowed football associations and clubs to tightly control wage structures and maintain an "amateur" status—despite the fact that modern media began to promote "star" players as leaders on the pitch and offer them covert performance and transfer bonuses. The relative surplus value that is top-sliced from the worker's wages and generated within mechanized production also determined the dynamics of sport teams in which

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individualism and collectivism could be played out in many variations, depending on the presentation of the sporting performance and the requirements of the competition. Within the team composition at the Tour de France since the 1920s, a division was instituted between the *leader d'equipe* and a number of *domestiques* (literally, servants) who were alternating to provide slipstreaming so that team members could conserve energy during long stages or before a sprint finish.[29] The separation of the collective into a foreman paid at a higher scale and those merely remunerated as workforce reflected early on factory organization, and the level of human exploitation and alienation at the Tour de France, quickly rivalled the worst excesses of industrial production processes.[30]

The subjectivism that might have been considered a marker of individualism finds in sport its most favorable expression in the collective that offers—within the confines of the exercise but expressively so—an alternative social configuration in which self-determination should be guaranteed by a supportive team. The objectification of the individual into a collective structure aided this notion in modernisms as utopian construct of inter-subjective values. Individualism within the collective resists objectification, which in turn is needed to formalize an oppositional structure.

Team work emphasizes the priority of the group over the autonomy of the individual, as set in social configuration. It impacts on the nature of the exercise itself—contrasting the individual and the collective—and on the common ownership of its means. Can a modern sportswoman or -man ever remove her- or himself from the collective in training or during an event? The ambivalent structure of modern sport, lying between property of the athlete's body by industry/media and its subjective physical activity, permits a view of sport as individual achievement that promotes a singular action being subsumed into the pervasive structure of capitalism. But it equally allows for the perception of sport as being without ownership, as providing a phenomenological base for universal activity that resides only within the collective body of people. The hallmark of modern sport is mass participation as well as mass spectatorship and consumption. Therefore, the collective determines the form as well as its reception. In principle, sport as a phenomenon of the body could be defined as property of the collective. While its action appears socially and culturally codified across modernisms, it has proven particular to the economic structure in which it must exist and to which it must stand in conflict.

Notes

1. Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1 [1867] (Moscow, 1977), 279.
2. Marx, *Capital*, 318.
3. F[ritz] Wildung, "Die Olympiade als Zentrum einer internationalen Kulturtagung," *Olympiade* 1, 2 (August 1924): 2.
4. Wildung, "Die Olympiade als Zentrum," 2.
5. Wilhelm Prager, *Die Neue Großmacht*, 1925, Deutsche Werkfilm G.m.b.H., Berlin, 35′, black/white, silent, Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum (DFF), digital scan 2018, archive no.19.625: available at https://www.filmportal.de/node/75833/stock#archivkopie.
6. A forty-eight-minute version of the film with German and English subtitles, as well as Dutch and French intertitles, was edited subsequently by Prager's Werkfilm company: Wilhelm Prager, *Die Neue Großmacht*, 1925, Deutsche Werkfilm G.m.b.H., Berlin, 48′, black/white, silent, Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum (DFF), digital scan 2019, archive no.22.493: available at https://www.filmportal.de/node/75833/stock#archivkopie.
7. *Erinnerungsschrift Erste Internationale Arbeiter Olympiade Frankfurt am Main, 24.-28. Juli 1925* (Berlin, 1925), cover. Tank was credited as "artistic advisor" for Prager's film.

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8. May and his team considered each integrated design ideas as representing the wider social structure; for example, architect and activist Grete Schütte-Lihotzky developed the *Frankfurter Küche*, the famed modernist reformation of the kitchen inside social housing, as a site for the feminist manifestation of domestic work and changing conditions of labor.
9. Participants of the International Congress in Frankfurt in 1924 to organize the games were uniformly male. On page fifteen of the fourth issue of the *Olympiade* journal, Elsa Volke wrote an article on "Women and Olympia," advocating modern sportswear and exercising routines for working women to emancipate themselves socially and physically.
10. "Erinnerungsschrift Erste Internationale Arbeiter," *Olympiade* 1.
11. Cultural historians who equate the visual languages of socialism and fascism often ignore their structural opposition in regard to the ownership of the means of production and the resulting control of the productive body of people; for her cinematic production, Riefenstahl used slave labor who were sent back to extermination camps after the filming was completed.
12. F[ritz] W[ildung], "Das Olympia der Masse," *Olympiade* 1, 3 (September 1924): 1.
13. *2. Arbeiter Olympiade in Wort und Bild* (Vienna, 1931), 5.
14. 2. "Arbeiterolympiade der Sozialistischen Arbeitersportinternationale," *Die Massenübungen: Musik/Bilder/Text/Geräte-Wettkampf-Übungen und Sprungtabelle* (Vienna, 1931).
15. *Die Massenübungen*, 1.
16. Grube wrote "March of the Workers Sport," a story on the Berlin Spartakiad for the "red sport"-issue of the socialist *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung (A.I.Z.),* 10:27 (1931), 532–33.
17. The German Democratic Republic commemorated their passing in 1963 with a series of stamps to raise money for the upkeep of monuments to anti-fascist resistance; available at https://www.arbeiterfussball.de/historisches/verbot-widerstand/ddr-briefmarken/ (accessed on May 30, 2022).
18. The original winner of the 200 meters women's race, the British I.K. Walter, who had distanced her compatriot M.L. Morrison by a considerable margin of 0.17 seconds, was disqualified when the organizers in Vienna found out that she had participated in the bourgeois women's-only event *Olimpiadi della Grazia* (The Olympics of Grace) in fascist Italy a couple of months prior.
19. Similarly, the Chilean junta under Augusto Pinochet used the Estadio Nacional Julio Martínez Prádanos as a prison camp to torture and kill political opponents and social activists. When the USSR refused to face Chile during the World Cup qualifiers of 1973 in this particular stadium (the Soviet football association had asked for a venue outside Santiago de Chile), the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) decreed that the game had to go ahead as planned, with only the Chilean team on the pitch, scoring into an empty net, while the USSR was disqualified from the 1974 World Cup tournament. The divisions between bourgeois and socialist sport continued with predictable outcomes.
20. *2. Arbeiterolympiade – Festführer* (Vienna, July 1931), 49–50.
21. *2. Arbeiter Olympiade in Wort und Bild*, 37.
22. *2. Arbeiter Olympiade in Wort und Bild*, 37.
23. *2. Arbeiterolympiade – Festführer*, 50.
24. Julius Deutsch, Unter roten Fahnen! Vom Rekord- zum Massensport (Vienna, 1931), 10.
25. Fritz Wildung, *Arbeitersport* (Berlin, 1930), 111.
26. Helmut Wagner, *Sport und Arbeitersport* (Berlin, 1930), 133–34.
27. Wagner, *Sport und Arbeitersport*, 134.
28. See, for example, Arsenal FC's manager Herbert Chapman during the 1930s or West Germany's national coach of the 1940s and '50s, Sepp Herberger, who proclaimed that in order to win a match, the team has to consist of "eleven friends."
29. The French word for "slipstreaming" is the physiological-cum-social term *aspiration*.
30. Albert Londres, a pioneering investigative journalist in France, who reported on his country's colonialism and imperialisms, published in 1924 the first book on the Tour de France, *Les Forçats de la route* (*Forced Labor on the Road*), a narrative viewed through the eyes of the cyclists, detailing the physical abuse of their bodies through inhumane conditions of the race and the resulting use of stimulants and drugs. See Albert Londres, *Les Forçats de la route* [1924] (Paris, 2008).

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