

1936: Brazil and the Olympic Games in Berlin

Brazil as candidate to host the Olympic Games 1936



The Zeppelin "Hindenburg" above the Olympic Stadium 1936

One of the topics discussed the last years had been the possibility of a candidature of Brazil for the Olympic Games 1936.¹ In the official minutes of the IOC Session organised in Monaco from 21st to 27th April 1927, Brazil is registered as one of the candidate countries.² In the minutes of the IOC Session in Berlin, having taken place from 22nd to 24th May 1930, Brazil was mentioned any more as candidate. Now the candidates had been cities and not countries any more. Those had been Alexandria, Barcelona, Berlin, Budapest, Buenos-Aires, Cologne, Dublin, Frankfurt, Helsinki, Nuremberg, Rome and Lausanne.³ In the minutes of the IOC Session in Monaco

1927 eight countries are listed with dedicated cities: Switzerland (Lausanne), Italy (Rome or Milan), Germany (Berlin), Spain (Barcelona), Finland (Helsinki), Hungary (Budapest), Egypt (Alexandria) and Brazil (Rio de Janeiro). The text also emphasises, that the candidates had been presented by the respective governments. Despite the context of the minutes no other document could be secured that mentioned the candidature of Brazil for 1936.⁴

Even though Argentina had not been mentioned in the minutes of 1927, Buenos-Aires appears in the minutes of 1930. An important letter in the IOC archives might shed light to that contradiction.⁵ In this letter, dated 10th August 1928, IOC President Count Henri de Baillet-Latour wrote to Argentine IOC member Riccardo Aldao, that the candidature of Buenos-

Aires had been accepted and the city will be added to the list of candidates.

This letter is of additional interest taking into account that Brazilian IOC member Raul do Rio Branco, who participated at the IOC Session 1927 in Monaco, positioned himself at several occasions against a candidature of Brazil to be a host for Olympic Games. To his opinion Brazil was not prepared to organise Olympic Games caused by a lack of sports culture in his home country. In a letter Raul do Rio Branco wrote to his colleagues at the IOC on occasion of the recognition of the foundation of the Brazilian Olympic Committee 1935⁶, he added a summary about his 22 years service as a member of the IOC (1913 to 1935).⁷ An important paragraph deals with a critical approach about Brazil in the Olympic Movement and does not mention a Brazilian candidature at all. On the contrary Raul do Rio Branco seriously doubts the capacity of Brazil to host Olympic Games. Related to that he records a conversation he had with the two Brazilian officials Ferreira dos Santos e Roberto Trompovsky Jr. during the Olympic Games 1920 in Antwerp. The possibility of Brazil hosting Olympic Games had been discussed and Raul do Rio Branco called it an illusion that died with the death of Roberto Trompovsky Jr. in December 1922.

Brazil's ambition to host Olympic Games goes back to the late second decade of the 20th century. In a small article published in the paper "Estado de São Paulo" at 2nd July 1919⁸ criticism had been raised against a possible candidature of France for the Olympic Games 1920 in the light of promised Olympic Games to Rio de Janeiro 1922.⁹ It should not be forgotten, that Brazil did not participate in any Olympic Games back in 1919!¹⁰

It should be allowed to summarize two hypotheses connected to the candidature for the Olympic Games 1936.

Hypothesis 1: It would have been possible, that the Brazilian government presented the candidature without accord to Raul do Rio Branco and did not follow up the process due to political and economical crises. Between 1927 and 1931 Brazil faced an extremely difficult situation with social and political movements leading to a coup d'état in 1930, when the military powers placed their President Getúlio Vargas. The economy of Brazil was based before on coffee production and changed to industrialisation with a strong bourgeoisie and a powerful middle class. Those new powers entered politics, reformed public institutions, influenced the industries and most important changed the Brazilian election system. At the same time first workers movements started to fight for a reduction of working hours and bad payments in the coffee

production. The so-called "tenentismo" and the "coluna Prestes" are the most famous examples of these movements. Brazil had been mainly an agrarian country with dependency from exterior powers and the crises of 1929 demonstrated the power of the coffee oligarchs in Brazil. The oligarchs from Minas Gerais and from São Paulo managed an agreement later called "café com leite" (coffee with milk) to nominate one candidate for the federal government to maintain their political power in Brazil. Finally the candidate from São Paulo, Júlio Prestes won the elections, but could not take over due to the coup d'état 1930. The country had been very close to civil war ended by the strong hand of President Getúlio Vargas, who gained power by force and had been elected only several years later. He ruled the country until 1945 and committed suicide 1954.

Hypotheses 2: It might be possible that the records in the minutes of the IOC Session 1927 in Monaco are wrong. Brazil was not meant to be the candidate, but from the beginning Argentine. This mistake might have had happened during the process of transcription and Brazil got confounded with Argentine, what happened quite often in those times.

Politics Arrive in Sport

The 1936 Brazilian Olympic Team is known and well documented in the official reports of the games.¹¹ The number of athletes, the sport disciplines in which the Brazilians participated and the organisation of the journeys of the team to and from the games are known. In this respect, however, the contemporary Brazilian daily papers expressed astonishment that two Brazilian teams were sent to Berlin.¹² In search of the reasons, one inevitably comes across a flood of sources relevant to the history of sports in the archives of the *Itamaraty*¹³, the *Confederação Brasileira de Desportos CBD* and the *Comité Olímpico Brasileiro COB*. These sources were evaluated here and viewed against the background of the events of the 1930s and in particular of the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games.

Two Brazilian Delegations at Berlin

81 Athletes from Brazil were recruited, of whom 72 actually participated including 6 women. These athletes did not take part in all the sporting disciplines; however, they were well represented in track and field events (10 athletes), swimming, water polo (15 athletes) and rowing competitions (22 athletes).¹⁴



The Brazilian team in Potsdam during the Olympic Games 1936
© Archives Roberto Gesta

It was not possible to celebrate any outstanding successes but amongst the Brazilian athletes there were some who later made careers as sports officials. Silvio de MAGALHÃES PADILHA took 5th place in the 400-metre hurdles and so became one of the few Brazilian athletes to reach the finals. He was later destined to become President of the COB¹⁵ for a period of 20



Brazilian swimmers (in the middle Faustin Godefroid Havelange), 1936
© Archives Roberto Gesta

years. Even more famous is Jean Marie Faustin Godefroid HAVELANGE, the long-term President of the CBD and later of FIFA. Jean Marie Faustin

Godefroid HAVELANGE participated in the 1500-metre freestyle swimming event and occupied the last place in the preliminary rounds being a long way off the pace.¹⁶



Brazilian swimmer (probably Sieglinde Lenk) in an ephemeric swimming-pool on board of the ship to the Olympic Games 1936
© Archives Roberto Gesta

The successes of the two sisters, Sieglinde and Maria LENK, were very important both from a sporting and a social point of view, not only in Brazil. The two swimmers came from a German immigrant family whose father Paulo LENK had introduced swimming for ladies in Brazil. Swimming played a central role in the *Clube Estrela* or *Stern* (Star)

founded in São Paulo in 1919, which was primarily frequented by immigrants and their descendants. There, Sieglinde and Maria LENK were destined to become Brazilian swimming stars and symbols of the feminist movement.¹⁷ Maria LENK was the first woman ever to use the 'butterfly' stroke.

„Eu não foi muito bem, não. Infelizmente engordei um bocado por causa das seis refeições diárias do navio e não passei das provas semifinais. Mas entrei para a história por ser a primeira mulher a nadar borboleta, estilo que aprendi depois de ler uma revista alemã.“¹⁸

The Brazilian team used the long sea crossing from Rio de Janeiro to Germany to train on deck. They could swim in a purpose-built swimming pool whilst tethered to the pool side.

„Dessa vez, construíram um tanque que servia de piscina no convés para que a gente pudesse treinar durante a viagem. Como o tanque era pequeno e não permitia que déssemos mais de duas braçadas, nosso técnico, Carlito, teve uma idéia genial: com uma corda, ele amarrava a gente na borda. Assim, eu podia nadar sem sair do lugar. Mas as ondas fortes faziam com que eu fosse lançada contra as paredes do tanque e boa parte da água era jogada para fora. Treinar ali era uma aventura.“¹⁹

Like all participating teams in the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games, the Brazilians were provided with support personnel for logistical arrangements and for their stay in Berlin. The honorary service officer Lt COLLATZ was available for their sojourn in Germany. The travel

arrangements were supported by the Olympia Attaché, Councillor BARTLING, who also maintained optimum relationships with Brazil in other respects and who, between 1934 and 1937, was an important German-Brazilian commercial advisor.²⁰



Brazilian shooters at the Olympic Village
© Paul Wolff 1936

The report on the Brazilian team revealed nothing unusual apart from certain astonishment in the contemporary daily press. The Rio de Janeiro publication *Correio da Manhã*, for example, reported on 20th July 1936 that the reception of the teams in the Berlin Olympic stadium had been a truly festive event. The yellow

and green flags of Brazil had flown alongside the swastika flags; a Hitler band played the Brazilian National Anthem. The event would have been completely harmonious had not two Brazilian Olympic teams arrived in Berlin. The two teams were combined without further ado, and, according to newspaper report, it had been a scandal that the non-selected athletes were not even allowed to participate as spectators. In the same daily paper *Correio da Manhã*, the subject was once more discussed in detail on 1st August 1936. An article was headed "Rata Olympica" (Olympic Joke), which poked fun at the behaviour of Brazilian officials. They had to pay the penalty for the lack of coherent sports supervision in Brazil.²¹

Why did Brazil send two Olympic teams to Berlin in 1936? The athletes of one team were selected by the CBD, the traditional umbrella organisation for sport in Brazil. It had been founded as early as 1914²² and always acted in the interest of the state, not least thanks to its presidents, and in particular to the one during the run-up to the Olympic Games in Berlin, Luis ARANHA, the brother of the Minister of Justice Osvaldo ARANHA. The latter was responsible for the establishment and expansion of the economic relations with the National Socialists in the Third Reich until 1937.²³ The documentation of political proximity was obviously a matter of concern for the CBD.

The COB, which was accredited by the IOC as the *National Olympic Committee of Brazil* positioned itself completely differently. The COB was founded on 11th June 1914²⁴ on the recommendation of the Brazilian IOC member Raul do RIO BRANCO, who lived in Switzerland and was a close

friend of Pierre de COUBERTIN. Its first president was Fernando MENDES DE ALMEIDA, who, however, never made an appearance for his organisation. The CBD recruited the participating athletes for the 1920 Olympic Games on behalf of the COB, which was then completely consigned to oblivion until the 1930s. It was founded for a second time on 19th May 1935 with Antonio PRADO JUNIOR as President and Alair PRATA as General Secretary.²⁵ The COB team was welcomed by the organising committee of the Berlin Games at the railway station and escorted to the Olympic Village, where the CBD team was due to arrive on the following day.²⁶ (Fig. 38, 39)

These events during the days shortly before the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games were due to start can be better understood only when they are viewed in the context of German-Brazilian politics. Therefore, a glance at the diary of events of the years leading up to the games is a must.

Brazilian Politics and the Third Reich

In a so-called civil revolution, Getúlio VARGAS, born in Southern Brazil, seized power in October 1930. On 11th November 1930, he abolished the constitution and appointed old comrades-in-arms, gauchos and descendants of immigrants as ministers. The afore-mentioned Osvaldo ARANHA was appointed Attorney General and Lindolfo COLLOR was allocated the newly created office of Labour Minister. Unlike the liberal and federalist policies of large-scale land ownership, Getúlio VARGAS set up a centrally organized Nation-State with industry and state-controlled labour unions.²⁷ With a new constitution, passed on 16th July 1936, this Nation-State was further reinforced. Rapid industrialisation took place with the help of the Third Reich, which was able to obtain raw materials from Brazil in return. Under the German economic politician Karl RITTER, the economic relationship between the two countries was strengthened. The Third Reich purchased goods in Brazil and deposited its payments in a so-called *Ausländer Sonderkonto für Inlandszahlungen* (ASKI) [Foreigners' Special Accounts for Inland Payments], with which Brazil was able to finance Brazilian imports from the Third Reich.²⁸ Thanks to this import/export symbiosis, German-Brazilian economic activities trebled between 1935 and 1936, and from 1933, companies such as *Siemens*, *Krupp*, *Stinnes* und *Bayer* could be found in Brazil. In 1936, four of the nine Brazilian airline companies were German-owned: *VASP*, *Luftschiffbau Zeppelin*, *Lufthansa* und *Condor*. Two telegraph companies spread their networks across the country, of which, one was wholly German owned (*Transocean*) and the second operated with the support of German capital

investment (*Havas*). It can be said that in the months before the Olympic Games in Berlin, German-Brazilian economic relationships had reached their peak.²⁹

In the years before and during the Olympic Games in Berlin, Brazil received the Third Reich with open arms and benefited not insignificantly from the National Socialist ties of the "*Auslandsdeutsche*" (German expatriates) to their homeland. However, the political mood in Brazil changed abruptly with the foundation of the *Estado Novo* (New State) and Getúlio VARGAS' blatant aspiration towards dictatorship. In an important speech broadcast on 10th November 1937, Vargas said the following:

„Quero instituir um governo de autoridade, liberto das peis da chamada democracia liberal, que inspirou a Constituição de 34. [...] Nos períodos de crise, como o que atravessamos, a democracia de partidos [...] subverte a hierarquia, ameaça a unidade pátria e põe em perigo a existência da nação."³⁰

This new Nationalism also targeted minorities and the freedom of speech. Thus, the Ethnic German movement in Brazil was severely constrained, which has also to be viewed in the context of Brazil's joining the Pan-American Union against the Third Reich in 1937.³¹ Portuguese was introduced as the first language in the mainly private German schools.³² On 18th April 1938, a decree was issued, forbidding all Brazilians, i.e. those born in Brazil, to join foreign organisations. This decree finally sounded the death-knell of German club culture in Brazil, which has been so strong during the first decades of the 20th century. Although many Ethnic German Brazilians were born in Brazil, they nevertheless adhered to German customs and German culture. Now, they were deprived of membership of German clubs and societies.³³ This resulted in most Ethnic German clubs adopting new names. For example, in 1938 the traditional German *Deutscher Turnverein* of São Paulo (founded in 1888) was renamed the *Associação de Cultura Física*.³⁴ Due to the decline of the influence of the German language and culture, the importance of the German clubs and societies in Brazil also diminished.

In the months before and during the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games, the relationship between Brazil and the Third Reich was exceptionally good. Even the propaganda of the Brazilian fascists leaned towards that of their ideological brothers in Europe. The *Departamento de Imprensa e Propaganda* (DIP) was given the task of centralising, organising and controlling national propaganda, both domestically and abroad. Theatre, movies, leisure activities, sports, radio and literature were censored. With this extract from the statutes, the DIP aligned itself intentionally and

explicitly towards the propaganda under Joseph GOEBBELS in the Third Reich.³⁵ Even the Brazilian secret police, the *Polícia política* with its feared President Filinto Strubing MUELLER collaborated closely with the Gestapo in the Third Reich. Filinto Strubing MUELLER, known as "Patron Saint of Torturers" was an ardent admirer of Heinrich HIMMLER and, in 1936, facilitated SS activity in Brazil. A close collaboration was fostered through Robert LEHR, the German representative of Zeiss in Brazil and the Brazilian ambassador in Berlin. In 1937, Filinto Strubing MUELLER visited Heinrich HIMMLER in Berlin to discuss with SS organs the "Jewish and communist Infiltration in Brazil". The result of this collaboration between the Gestapo and the *Polícia política* was, inter alia that, during Filinto Strubing MUELLER'S term of presidency, at least 20.000 people disappeared and many innocent souls were handed over to the Third Reich, the majority of whom was murdered in concentration camps.³⁶

The rapprochement between Brazil and the Third Reich and vice versa was characterised by various motives. The Third Reich took great interests in the ca. 1,000,000 Germans and Ethnic German citizens in Brazil. Brazil on the other hand expected to benefit from an economic boom in the country. Finally it was their common objective to fight communism with all means available.



Photographers at the Olympic Games 1936
© Paul Wolff 1936

From 1934 to 1936, several fascist groups expanded their influence in Brazil. Primarily, German, Italian and Polish immigrants founded a nationalist movement, which became known as *Integralismo*. The ideological structures of the *Integralismo* corresponded to German or Italian fascism, which is why developments in several European countries were similar in some respects. Thus, Third Reich propaganda was bound to fall on fertile ground.³⁷

In 1935, approx. 800,000 to 1,000,000 German-speaking inhabitants, who were acknowledged by the National

Socialists to be "*Volksdeutsche*" (Ethnic Germans) lived in Brazil. Of these citizens, approx. 100,000 held German passports and 220,000 were born in Germany. The majority of the Germans living in Brazil had attended one of the 2,500 German schools and read one of the 10 German newspapers and magazines. As early as 1928, the *Deutsche Zeitung* (German Newspaper) published in São Paulo already had a circulation of 55,000.³⁸ The *Deutsche Turnerbund* (German Gymnastics Union) had 58 affiliated clubs with a combined membership of 8,000 and was organised precisely along Third Reich lines. As in the Third Reich, in Brazil the Gymnastics Union also stood solidly behind the National Socialists, as can be seen in the example of the *Deutsche Turn- und Sportverein Rio de Janeiro* (German Gymnastics and Sports Union Rio de Janeiro).³⁹

The *Deutsch-Brasilianische Jugendring* (German Brazilian Youth Council), which regularly trained in Germany, was set up along the lines of the *Hitlerjugend* (Hitler Youth). The interweaving of German culture, politics and ideology on both sides of the Atlantic is also expressed in the generous financial support afforded to German schools in Brazil.⁴⁰

Systematic promotion of German culture abroad was enshrined in the politics and administration of the Third Reich. This particularly applied to sports organisations, which after the "*Gleichschaltung*" (co-ordination by the NS regime) of sports associations and the foundation of the *Deutsche Reichsbund für Leibesübungen* (German Reich League for Physical Exercise) in 1934 were assimilated by the general National Socialist system. This order was valid both for domestic and foreign "districts".⁴¹

German traditions survived for a long period, especially in Brazil, since Ethnic Germans settlements remained very homogeneous.⁴² The white settlers were popular in Brazil, as was evidenced by a survey among the indigenous population conducted in the winter of 1933/34. Results showed that 97% of the Brazilians welcomed Germans and Italians, 45% Asians and only 18% Africans. This result was also echoed in a quotation by Osvaldo ARANHA in Washington on the 23rd July 1935: "We need a Brazil of white men.....nothing of other races."⁴³ This claim to superiority of the white elite over Brazil is in line with the absurd view held by Adolf HITLER of the roll of the Germans in South America:

*"Hier werden wir ein neues Deutschland schaffen. [...] Hier haben wir alles, was wir nötig haben. [...] Übrigens haben wir ein Anrecht auf diesen Kontinent. Die Fugger und Welser haben hier Beziehungen gehabt."*⁴⁴

By fighting communism, Brazil and the Third Reich pursued another common objective. Since the foundation of the ANL (*Aliança Nacional*

Libertadora) (National Liberation Alliance) in 1935, the communists were openly and vigorously persecuted under Getúlio VARGAS. At the beginning of the thirties, Brazil faced two political options, either communism or fascism, of which the latter was destined to prevail under Getúlio VARGAS.⁴⁵ The leader of the communist movement was Luís Carlos PRESTES, who returned to Brazil in 1934 from Soviet exile and subversively founded the ANL. On 11th July 1935, the ANL was outlawed as a threat to national security. However, at this time, there was already strong support for the ANL from within the armed forces. The communist movement around the ANL could only be crushed by force of arms and with the help of the *Polícia política*. In the following months and years, the Brazilian regime stringently adopted the aggressive anticommunist policy of the Third Reich.⁴⁶

In the years immediately preceding and during the period of the 1936 Berlin Summer Olympics the relationship between Brazil and the Third Reich was extremely close. Above all, German interest was to bind the "*Auslandsdeutsche*" (German expatriates) to National Socialism. Furthermore, by exporting technology and technological products from Germany and importing raw materials from Brazil, lucrative business relations could be built. Brazil shared not only the economic interests, but also in its search for its own political identity it was strongly influenced by the Third Reich (e.g.: *Polícia política*, propaganda politics). (Fig. 40)

Against this background, the sending of two Brazilian teams can be better understood, wherein political motives must have played a central role.⁴⁷ The team of the young and, in general, non-political COB united the Brazilian sporting idols of the day, Maria and Sieglinde LENK, Piedade COUTINHO and Scylla VENANCIO being the athletic



Getúlio Vargas congratulates Maria Lenk

idols of Brazilian swimming and women's sport. With these swimmers, Brazil could present itself as a progressive and modern country. In addition, however, the authorities ensured nomination of both male and female athletes from the ranks of the so-called "*Auslandsdeutsche*" (German expatriates). For example, the Brazilian rowing eight and cox consisted exclusively of German immigrants, and Hilda von PUTTKAMMER

represented Brazil in the foils. The far more developed sporting activities and the club culture of the immigrants compared with Brazilian tradition made their qualification for the national team easier. At the same time, the Brazilian regime was able to demonstrate an empathy with the Third Reich and to offer a number of athletes and officials the opportunity to gain ideological know-how from the Third Reich. For example, the "*Auslandsdeutsche*" (German expatriates) as well as the Latin Americans, were entitled to both free travel and overnight accommodation during the Olympic Congress and the *Kraft-durch-Freude-Konferenz* (Strength through Joy Conference) in 1936.⁴⁸ Agents of the *Polícia política* travelled with the Brazilian teams to Germany to be trained by the Gestapo close to Munich (presumably in Dachau).⁴⁹

It is obvious that far more tasks were allocated to the two Brazilian Olympic teams besides representing their country in sport. The journey to Berlin was one of the few during the years of the most intensive co-operation between Brazil and the Third Reich. The Brazilian delegations were pursuing far-reaching objectives beyond sporting exchange, which, unfortunately, today can only be surmised.⁵⁰

The Brazilian participation at Chess Olympia 1936 in Munich

After the Olympic Games in Garmisch-Partenkirchen and the Olympic Games in Berlin, the Chess Olympiad in Munich should define a third Olympic mega event in Germany 1936.⁵¹ The political dimension of the event got additionally underlined by the location Munich, which had been regarded as "Hauptstadt der Bewegung" (capital of movement) by the National Socialists and the centennial celebration of the Chess Club Munich.⁵² The German Reich had two main reasons to organise Chess Olympia 1936 in Munich despite a lack of membership at the World Chess Federation FIDE and therefore the unofficial status of the



Logo of the Chess Olympiad in Munich

event.⁵³ The event was part of the German Reich propaganda promoting chess as an able-bodied game to ideologically educate the German "soldier". And the Olympic year 1936 could be completed with a third mega-event after the organisation of the winter and summer Olympics.⁵⁴ Huge banners in Munich promoted the event; at one of the central squares - the Karlstor - luminous writings announced the event including the Olympic rings. The chess players even had been called "Olympioniken des Geistes" (Olympic champions of the spirit).⁵⁵

The organiser

The German Reich forced 1933 all chess federations in Germany to connect to the "Großdeutscher Schachbund GSB" (Greater German Chess Association) including the powerful German Chess Federation and the Workers Chess Clubs. This political move enabled the German Reich to exclude communists and ideologically more important also Jews, since chess sports had been dominated by Jewish players worldwide and therefore also in Germany. With the officially proclaimed goal of aryanisation the GSB even excluded so-called Quarter-Jews from their association even surpassing the laws of the German Reich. The level of solidarity to the German Reich got also its expression in the design of the logo for GSB with the usage of the swastika inside a chess field. Even the NSDAP could not accept such a symbol as the GSB had not been part of the party! The GSB wanted to be recognised as a loyal and politically opportunistic institution inside the machinery of the German Reich. Already in the dusk of the Chess Olympia 1936 the German Reich promoted chess as a sports to mentally prepare German soldiers to war. It even had been called "Wehrschach" (able-bodied chess) and should be absorbed by everybody. Chess Olympia 1936 in Munich was designed and organised as tool of maximum propaganda starting the day after the Olympic Games in Berlin 1936.⁵⁶

During the time of the Chess Olympia in Munich a huge chess event had been organised in Nottingham with the attendance of some elite players. For England this had been reason enough not to send a team to Munich, the same had been done by the US. The strongest nation in Latin America, Argentine did not send a team either, even though the organisers in Munich would have paid the travel costs. The Netherlands did send a B-team on purpose and refused to report the Munich event in its official chess press. Even it is not possible to state an official boycott for Chess Olympia 1936, indirect boycotts are obvious and in reverse participating

nations should be regarded as to be sympathetic to the German Reich.⁵⁷ The only team participating from outside of Europe had been Brazil!

The organisation

Munich was not only the location for the biggest Chess Olympia ever organised since then, even it had not been officially accredited by the World Chess Federation FIDE and therefore remained an unofficial chess Olympia. It also had seen the most expensive and representative promotional features with banners from participating nations and oversized knightheads in front of the trade hall at "Theresienwiese", where the games took place.⁵⁸



The hall of the Chess Olympiad

The event took place inside the trade hall at, it had been extremely hot mid August 1936 and around 3000 spectators had been brought from all over Germany to watch the event. As part of the opening ceremony a life size chess game had been performed, banners of all participating nations had been carried along towards a swastika flag, that finally was surrounded by them. Such symbolic propaganda approaches had not been seen even in Berlin, following the official report!⁵⁹

Chess fitted perfectly to the ideology of the National Socialists and had been promoted as "Volksspiel" (game for the people). Already back in 1933 the educational purpose of chess already had been emphasized in setting the "Wehrschach" (able-bodied chess) in close relation to able-bodied sport.⁶⁰ The able-bodied chess should be absorbed by everybody and the Chess Olympia 1936 in Munich was designed and organised as tool of maximum propaganda starting the day after the Olympic Games in Berlin 1936.⁶¹

The Brazilian participation

A quick view to the list of participating nations creates astonishment. 21 mostly European nations took part with 208 players. Each team could nominate maximum 10 players. Brazil had been the only team outside of Europe to send chess players. As mentioned earlier big chess nations like USA, Argentine and England did not come to Munich and preferred to participate at the chess event organised the same time in Nottingham. They did not officially boycott the Chess Olympia 1936, but probably regarded their absence as convenient. Brazil on the contrary did not participate in any international FIDE chess event ever before and many years after Munich, USA, Argentine and England never missed any. One might ask here, why Brazil made so many efforts to take part. Could it be because of the strong political relations between the Getúlio Vargas regime and the German Reich? It should not be forgotten that the Vargas regime demonstrated open solidarity to NSDAP especially during the Olympic year 1936. Lucrative business relations bound the two regimes, vast groups of German expatriates in Brazil officially confessed to the ideology of the German Reich and strong relations between the secret services existed.⁶²

Brazil did not only send a team with appropriate chess players to Chess Olympia 1936 Munich, it also took care to exclude those not opportune to the Vargas regime. In order to understand the situation of chess in Brazil and the organisations behind, it will be necessary to share a glimpse of Brazilian chess history.

The first internationally recognized and highly respected Brazilian chess player had been João Caldas Viana Neto, who was able to reach a draw against famous German Richard Teichmann in Rio de Janeiro 1905. Around two decades later the first national chess competition had been organised in Rio de Janeiro 1927 with the winner João Souza Mendes Júnior from the organising city Rio. He had been born on the Azores Islands, but became a nationalised Brazilian and one of the dominant chess players during the early decades of chess in Brazil. Another important personality in Brazilian chess was Walter Oswaldo Cruz, the son of the even more famous influential doctor and one the first medical scientists with international recognition, Oswaldo Cruz. The national championship of 1932 had been badly organised due to political changes - Getúlio Vargas pushed himself to power after a bloodless coup d'état in October 1930 and chess doyen João Caldas Viana Neto passed away one year later. The small and fragile Brazilian chess community found herself paralysed and only had been able to organise the championship with two inscribed participants. The young Orlando Roças Júnior managed the win.

The final of the 7th Brazilian Chess Championship started in September 1935 with the two finalists Tomás Pompeu Acioly Borges and Orlando Roças Júnior. The later had been part of the carioca bourgeoisie like most Brazilian chess players of that time. They cooperated or at least tolerated the nationalist regime of Getúlio Vargas, himself a Brazilian bourgeois empowered by clientele of this type of society. Tomás Pompeu Acioly Borges on the contrary derived from a family from Fortaleza in Northern Brazil and had been an active supporter of the anti-fascist "Aliança Nacional Libertadora" (National Liberation Alliance). The games of the two adversaries ended in chaos with Orlando Roças Júnior not respecting the decisions of referees and even provoking arguments with the result of a change of the president of the "Federação Brasileira de Xadrez" (Brazilian Chess Federation). Nevertheless and finally Tomás Pompeu Acioly Borges had been declared winner.⁶³

But the best Brazilian chess player at the eve of the Chess Olympia 1936 in Munich had not been nominated for this international event.⁶⁴ On the contrary, Tomás Pompeu Acioly Borges was imprisoned from March 1936 to June 1937 and later immigrated to Argentina. The rules for the Brazilian Chess Championship were changed and Borges could never again participate at those championships.

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De Franceschi Neto-Wacker, Marcia / Wacker, Christian 2010: Brazil goes Olympic, pp. 127-144.

De Franceschi Neto-Wacker, Marcia / Wacker, Christian 2016: Brazil, Berlin and Bavaria - back in 1936. In: JOH 2, 2016, pp. 24-27.



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¹ This topic already had been mentioned at DE FRANCESCHI NETO-WACKER - WACKER 2010, p. 165 without further remarks due to a lack of primary sources.

² Despite the usual process to nominate cities, the IOC registered only candidate countries during its IOC Session from 21st to 27th April 1927 in Monaco.

³ The same minutes mentioned by mistake, that the Olympic Games of 1936 will be the 50th anniversary of the beginning of modern Olympic Games. In fact the games commemorated 40 years since the first Olympics in 1896.

⁴ The last research at the archives of IOC took place by the authors at 10th May 2016.

⁵ This letter is stored together with all further communication regarding the other candidate cities mentioned in the minutes 1930 in one and the same folder at IOC archives.

⁶ Regarding the two foundations of the Brazilian Olympic Committee see also DE FRANCESCHI NETO-WACKER - WACKER 2010, pp. 85-104.

⁷ When we carried out our research for the book DE FRANCESCHI NETO-WACKER - WACKER 2010 this letter did not exist yet in the IOC archives (folder Brazil). Probably it had been relocated later.

⁸ Lamartine Da Costa had been so kind to forward this article to us.

⁹ It had been agreed with the IOC to call the Regional Games in Rio de Janeiro 1922 Regional Olympic Games. See also DE FRANCESCHI NETO-WACKER - WACKER 2010, pp. 152-160.

¹⁰ The only exception might have been Adolpho Christiano Klingelhofer, a Brazilian national, who participated at the Olympic Games 1900 in Paris and had been wrongly considered French. The first official participation of a Brazilian team took place in 1920.

¹¹ ORGANISING COMMITTEE FOR THE XI 1936 BERLIN OLYMPICS E.V. (ED): *Official Report*, Berlin 1937 (Vol.2); WACKER, Christian: "Brazil and Berlin 1936. The Brazilian participation in the 1936 Olympic Summer Games in Berlin", in: LENNARTZ, Karl & WASSONG, Stephan & ZAWADZKI, Thomas (ED.): *New Aspects of Sport History. The Olympic Lectures*, Saint Augustine 2007, p. 228-233.

¹² *Correio da Manhã* (Rio de Janeiro) from 20.07.1936 and 01.08.1936.

¹³ The Brazilian Foreign Ministry is accommodated in the In *Itamaraty* building in Brasília.

¹⁴ ORGANISING COMMITTEE: *Official Report*, p. 596-597.

¹⁵ ORGANISING COMMITTEE: *Official Report*, Photo 654; CARDOSO, Mauricio., *100 anos de Olimpíadas de Atenas a Atlanta*, São Paulo 1996, p. 103.

¹⁶ CARDOSO: *100 anos*, p. 103.

¹⁷ ORGANISING COMMITTEE: *Official Report*, p. 388; GUEDES, Claudia Maria & ZIEFF, Susan Gail & NEGREIROS, Plínio José Labriola: "Clubes de imigrantes em São Paulo – SP", in: DA COSTA, Lamartine (ED.): *Atlas do Esporte no Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro 2005, p. 198. For yet a few more years and at the venerable age of over 90, shortly before her death, Maria

Lenk crossed the bay surrounding the Sugarloaf in Rio de Janeiro. More information about Maria Lenk can be found earlier in the chapter.

¹⁸ "I did not perform very well. Unfortunately I put on some weight due to the six meals a day, which they served on the ship, and I was not able to get past the semi-finals. But I took my place in history being the first woman to use the 'butterfly' stroke, which I read about in a German magazine." *Revista do conselho federal de Educação Física (Journal of the Federal Council of Physical Education)* from 24th June 2007.

¹⁹ "This time, they built a tank that served as a pool on deck so that we could train during the journey. As the tank was small and did not allow us more than two strokes, our technician, Carlito had a brilliant idea: He tied us to the side with a rope, so I could swim without moving forward. But the waves caused the ship to roll so that I was thrown against the walls of the tank and much of the water was spilt. Training this way had been a real adventure." *Revista do conselho federal de Educação Física (Journal of the Federal Council of Physical Education)* from 24th June 2007.

²⁰ ORGANISING COMMITTEE: *Official Report*, p. 214.

²¹ BELLERS, Juergen (ED.): *Die Olympiade Berlin 1936 im Spiegel der ausländischen Presse* (The 1936 Berlin Olympics reflected in the foreign press). Muenster 1986, p. 127-129.

²² DE FRANCESCHI NETO, Marcia: *A participação do Brasil no movimento olímpico internacional no período de 1896 a 1925*, (unpublished Doctorate Thesis) Rio de Janeiro 1999, p. 75.

²³ BUENO, Eduardo: *Brasil: uma História*, São Paulo 2003, p. 335. Osvaldo ARANHA had massively offered his services to the National Socialists in Europe and also tried to approach Benito MUSSOLINI, albeit unsuccessfully. Obviously, however, his commercial convictions took priority over political interests since, in 1937, Osvaldo ARANHA convinced the Brazilian government to join the Pan-American Union under the leadership of the USA.

²⁴ More information about the founding of the first COB can be found in the chapter *Brazilian Olympic Sports Politic*.

²⁵ More information about the early history of the COB. DE FRANCESCHI NETO: *A participação* (1999) p. 103; ABREU, Neise & HECKSHER, Raul & DE FRANCESCHI NETO, Marcia & RAJMAN, Bernard: „Comité Olímpico Brasileiro – COB”, in: DA COSTA, Lamartine (ED.): *Atlas do Esporte no Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro 2005, p. 76-77.

²⁶ CARDOSO: *100 anos*, p. 103.

²⁷ BUENO: *Brasil* (2003) p. 327.

²⁸ SEITENFUS, Ricardo Antônio: *O Brasil de Getúlio Vargas e a formação dos blocos: 1930-1942*, São Paulo 1985, p. 76-78.

²⁹ KATZ, Friedrich: "Einige Grundzüge der Politik des deutschen Imperialismus in Lateinamerika" (Some Main Features of the Politics of German Imperialism in Latin America), in: SANKE, Heinz (ED.), *Der Deutsche Faschismus in Lateinamerika* (German Fascism in Latin America), Berlin 1966, p. 21-23; LEVINE, Robert M.: *The Vargas Regime*, New York/London 1970, p. 25, 31; SEITENFUS: *Getúlio Vargas* (1985) p. 76-81.

³⁰ "I want to establish a government authority, free of the burden of the so-called liberal democracy, which inspired the Constitution of 34. [...] In times of crisis like those we are going through, the democratic parties [...] undermine the hierarchy; endanger the unity of our fatherland and the existence of the nation." BUENO: *Brasil* (2003) p. 334.

³¹ BUENO: *Brasil* (2003) p. 335.

³² HARMS-BALTZER, Kaete: "Die Nationalisierung der deutschen Einwanderer und ihrer Nachkommen in Brasilien als Problem der deutsch-brasilianischen Beziehungen 1930-1938" (The nationalisation of German immigrants and their descendants in Brazil as a problem of German-Brazilian relations 1930 -1938), in: BOCK, Hans-Juergen (ED.): *Bibliotheca Ibero-Americana, Bd. 14*, Berlin 1970, p. 21ff. In article 150, letter d (p. 444) of the constitution of July 16th 1934 the following regulation, which became invalid in 1938, was also found. : "Ensino, nos estabelecimentos particulares, ministrado no idioma pátrio, salvo os de línguas estrangeira." (The lessons in the private establishments must be [held] in the mother tongue; excluded are those [establishments] with foreign languages).

³³ LEVINE: *Vargas* (1970) p. 27.

³⁴ GUEDES & ZIEFF & NEGREIROS: „Clubes de imigrantes", in: DACOSTA: *Atlas do Brasil* (2005) p. 197.

³⁵ BUENO: *Brasil* (2003) p. 336.

³⁶ Amongst the prominent victims are, inter alia, Erna KRUEGER, Olga BENARIO PRESTES, and Elise EWERT. The number of unrecorded cases of victims abducted under Filinto Strubing MUELLER may be a multiple of the 20,000 mentioned in the documents. BUENO: *Brasil* (2003) p. 336; SEITENFUS, *Getúlio Vargas* (1985) p. 86ff.

³⁷ LEVINE: *Vargas* (1970) p. 26.

³⁸ KATZ: "Imperialism" (1966) p. 22; LEVINE: *Vargas* (1970) p. 26f; SEITENFUS: *Getúlio Vargas* (1985) p. 75.

³⁹ BERNETT, Hajo: *Der Weg des Sports in die NS-Diktatur* (The development of sport under NS Dictatorship) 1983, p. 82f.

⁴⁰ HARMS-BALTZER: "Nationalisierung" (Nationalisation) (1970) p. 34; SEITENFUS: *Getúlio Vargas* (1985) p. 99; ARTUCIO, Hugo Fernandez: *The Nazi Underground in South America*, New York 1942. A payment of 4 million Reich marks to German schools in Brazil is recorded.

⁴¹ BERNETT: *NS Dictatorship* (1983) p. 15-37.

⁴² HARMS-BALTZER: "Nationalisierung" (Nationalisation) (1970) p. 11ff.

⁴³ LEVINE: *Vargas* (1985) p. 20f.

⁴⁴ "Here we will create a new Germany. [...] Here we have everything we need. [...] By the way, we have a claim to this continent. The Fugger and Welser families have had relations here." RAUSCHNING, Hermann: *Gespräche mit Hitler* (Conversations with Hitler), Zuerich/New York 1947, p. 62f., p. 133f.

⁴⁵ LEVINE: *Vargas* (1970) p. 55f.

⁴⁶ BUENO: *Brasil* (2003) p. 332f; SEITENFUS: *Getúlio Vargas* (1985) p. 86.

⁴⁷ In a more extensive study, the tasks of the two teams outside of sport could be examined. It has to be confirmed which athletes were sent from which sports clubs. A large number of hitherto not yet examined sources in the *Itamaraty*, at the CBD and the COB are expected to provide an interesting and surprising insight into the areas of conflict between sport and politics.

⁴⁸ KRUEGER, Arnd & MURRAY, William (ED.): *The Nazi Olympics. Sport, Politics and Appeasement in the 1930s*, Urbana/Chicago 2003, p. 235f.

⁴⁹ Document in the Brazilian Foreign Ministry (*Itamaraty*).

⁵⁰ Document in the Brazilian Foreign Ministry (*Itamaraty*).

⁵¹ SCHACH-ECHO, Vol 5, Nr. 9.7, Sept. 1936, p. 212: "... dritte Großveranstaltung des olympischen Jahres...".

⁵² TAL, Mario: *Bruderküsse und Freudentränen. Eine Kulturgeschichte der Schach-Olympiaden*, 2008, p. 99.

⁵³ Due to the new ideological positioning of the "Großdeutscher Schachbund GSB" (Greater German Chess Association) the association decided already 1933 to step out of FIDE because of its national socialist ideology and its racist regulations especially against Jews. FIDE would never have had accepted these restrictions and the GSB simply acted before getting excluded by the World Chess federation. Therefore the Chess Olympia 1936 was organised without FIDE, even though FIDE did not boycott the event and left the decisions for participation to the member countries. See also NEGELE 2008, p. 22. TAL 2008, 103

⁵⁴ TAL 2008, p. 115.

⁵⁵ RICHTER, Kurt (Ed.): *Schach-Olympia München 1936*, Berlin - Leipzig, Vol. 1, 1936, pp. 29, 117.

⁵⁶ NEGELE, Michael: *Propaganda auf 64 Feldern. Das Schach-Olympia München 1936*. In: *Karl*, 3, 2008, pp. 20-26, p. 21. TAL 2008, pp. 92-95.

⁵⁷ TAL 2008, p. 103.

⁵⁸ TAL 2008, pp. 100-102, 115. Hungary won most medals and supported the GSB to return to FIDE in 1939.

⁵⁹ RICHTER Vol. 2, 1937, pp. 68-69. Munich as cultural centre of the German Reich had been the worthy location for an intellectual fight and an event to serve the peace, following the opening speech of the mayor of Munich, Karl Tempel. See also RICHTER Vol. 1, 1936, pp. 30-31.

⁶⁰ POST, Erhardt 1933: *Erster Kongreß des Großdeutschen Schachbundes in Pyrmont*, p. 9: "Neben dem Wehrsport, der der körperlichen Ertüchtigung dient, wollen wir zur geistigen Schulung und Erziehung das den ehrlichen Kampf darstellende Wehrspiel treten lassen, das uralte Schach."

⁶¹ NEGELE 2008, p. 21. TAL 2008, p. 95.

⁶² DE FRANCESCHI NETO-WACKER, Marcia - WACKER, Christian 2011, *Brazil goes Olympic*, (2nd edition) pp. 134-144. TAL 2008, p. 105. WACKER, Christian 2007, *Brasilien und Berlin. Die brasilianische Beteiligung an den olympischen Sommerspielen in Berlin 1936*. In: *ISHPES-Studies* 13, 2, pp. 228-233.

⁶³ COSTA.

⁶⁴ Nine Brazilian chess players participated at Chess Olympia 1936 in Munich: João Souza Mendes Júnior, Walter Oswaldo Cruz, Oswaldo Cruz Filho, Raul Herman Charlier, Ademar da Silva Rocha, Otávio Figueira Trompowsky, Cauby Pulcherio and Heitor Alberto Carlos. The ninth player is called J. Cruz in the official report RICHTER Vol. 1 1936, p. 33 and cannot be identified with certainty.