

When Duty Met Wish: The Recognition of the Francoist Spanish Olympic Committee by the IOC During the Civil War (1936-1939)¹

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Abstract

Several scholars have examined how the International Olympic Committee (IOC) dealt with the Spanish question during the Civil War (1936-39), but to our knowledge it has never been the subject of an in-depth monographic study. The predominant view in the reviewed literature is that a conservative, aristocratic IOC, ideologically close to the Spanish rebels, swiftly recognised the Francoist Spanish Olympic Committee (SOC) set up in November 1937 to the detriment of the Republican equivalent based in Barcelona; that is, the IOC took sides and somehow *betrayed* the legitimate Republican SOC.

Our research provides a slightly different perspective. The IOC undeniably sympathised with the insurgents and empathised with the members of the Spanish Olympic movement who had to flee the Republican zone due to political-ideological persecution. Yet at the same time, by officially recognizing the SOC reconstituted in San Sebastián by the baron of Güell and count of Vallellano (IOC's representatives in Spain), the IOC was fulfilling its duty in the legal sense, as according to their own statutes, a national Olympic Committee was valid *only* if constituted or supported by the IOC delegates in the incumbent nation. Moreover, the Republican SOC was disbanded in July 1936: both its president, who had resigned just before the outbreak of the war together with the rest of its members, and its general secretary escaped abroad to avoid political persecution.

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The Spanish Olympic Movement, therefore, did not split into two branches during the Civil War; it simply disappeared from the Republican side, ignored by those in command, in contrast with the ‘Olympic proactivism’ of the Francoists. Yet even if there *had* been a real choice for the IOC to make, in the latter’s eyes the creation of the Francoist SOC by the IOC’s Spanish members meant the automatic *de iure* dissolution of the Republican counterpart.

Keywords: International Olympic Committee, Spanish Civil War, Spanish Olympic Committee

Introduction

The 1936-1939 Spanish Civil War was troublesome for many aspects of international relations, including the Olympic Movement, which after more than 40 years under the leadership of Pierre de Coubertin (1896-1925) and Enri de Baillet-Latour (1925-1942) reached maturity in the 1936 Berlin Games. The management of the Spanish question during the Civil War by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has been dealt with in a variety of scholarly contributions, but to our knowledge it has never been the subject of a monographic study like the one presented here.

A review of the literature reveals a broad consensus regarding the alacrity with which the IOC recognised the Francoist Spanish Olympic Committee (SOC), set up in November 1937, to the detriment of the pre-existing Republican SOC,¹ a decision generally attributed to the IOC’s political-ideological sympathies with the values and ideology of the Spanish rebels. For instance, according to Aragón, ‘Lausanne would rather have the Spanish entity linked to the new regime’;² Rieck surmises that the IOC ‘probably ignored attempts to get in touch with them by the Republican COE [SOC] from Barcelona which was officially still a member of the IOC’ and ‘promoted the rebel

sports body ... obviously because they explicitly sympathised politically with them'.³

Castro Montes shares a similar viewpoint, asserting that 'the political sympathies ... [of the IOC] were clearly with the conservative camp' in the Spanish conflict.⁴ What underlies this perspective is the idea that, with Spanish Olympism split in two by the Civil War, the IOC sided with the Francoists rather than the Republicans for political-ideological reasons, failing to respect the alleged legitimacy of the latter.

Our reading of the facts is slightly different. It is clear that the IOC were undoubtedly ideologically close to the Spanish rebels and had little, if any, sympathy for the Republicans; their support for the Francoist SOC is also undisputable. At the same time, the IOC's recognition of the Francoist SOC was a legal duty stemming from its own statutes, which stipulated that the only valid SOC was the one constituted by its IOC delegates in Spain. Moreover, even if this had not been the case, the decision was effectively taken out of their hands when the Republican SOC *de facto* ceased to exist in July 1936. In other words, the Spanish Olympic movement did not split into two branches during the war, given that the Republican side failed to materialize amidst the indifference and even hostility of the Frente Popular forces in command during the war towards mainstream Olympism. Thus, by recognizing the Francoist SOC in November 1937 the IOC fulfilled its legal duty, which indeed perfectly fitted its political leanings but was also the only available option in the absence of anything approaching Republican Olympism during the war. This absence should be to a great extent imputed to the Republican war-time sports policy of supporting 'popular/workers sports' and its incompatibility with supporting 'aristocratic/bourgeois Olympism'.

This research is based on a broad literature review, a thorough search of online press archives, and an on-site consultation of the IOC archives performed in December 2022 and August 2023. The SOC archives were not consulted because, according to the SOC

secretariat, they do not hold the minutes of the SOC, nor correspondence between the SOC and other entities, for the reviewed period.⁵

The Spanish Olympic Movement and the Second Republic: A Troubled Relationship

On April 25 and 26 1931, a few days after the overthrow of King Alfonso XIII in a meteoric but bloodless revolution and the establishment of a Republican regime in Spain, the IOC convened in Barcelona for its annual meeting, arranged long before by the at that time only IOC's representative in Spain, Santiago Güell i López (the baron of Güell). During Primo de Rivera's dictatorship, the SOC had nurtured a project of hosting the 1936 Olympic Games in Barcelona, with the active support of the regime, King Alfonso XIII, and the local elites. There were high hopes that their bid would be approved at the Barcelona Session, as Güell confided to the press in late March, a few days before the collapse of the Monarchy.⁶

If the IOC members had supported the Barcelona candidacy, their mood was changed by the political turmoil engulfing Spain. Only 19 members attended the meeting, with 26 absentees, 'due to the false news which had circulated concerning the truth of the general situation in this beautiful country', as the IOC's president Henri de Baillet-Latour was quoted as saying in a local newspaper.⁷ Even Güell himself, supreme promoter of the Barcelona project, was an excused absentee, as he fled the country during these troubled days, like many other conservative and monarchist leaders.⁸ In view of the circumstances, the IOC decided to postpone the vote for the 1936 games, which was eventually held by correspondence, and the results were announced on May

13: Berlin was chosen to host the games of the XI Olympiad with 43 votes in favour versus 16 for Barcelona.⁹

This amounted to a huge failure for the staunchly monarchic SOC, chaired by the aristocrat Eusebio López y Díaz de Quijano, marquis of Lamadrid and baron of Güell's relative; only one year before, the entity had unanimously expressed 'attachment ... to its honorary president His Royal Highness the Prince of Asturias'.¹⁰ During the Barcelona Session, the members of the IOC had made a point of thanking King Alfonso XIII, expressing that 'none of them can forget the support given [by him] to the Olympic ideal'.¹¹ It also represented a personal failure for Güell, who shortly afterwards wrote to the IOC's president, Baillet-Latour, from Hendaye:

You may imagine the terrible days I spent during the celebration of the Barcelona meeting of our committee. On the one hand, I knew that my attendance could be a serious obstacle for the official activities; on the other hand, I failed in my duties to the committee by not being able to attend a meeting that I myself had requested for Barcelona ... I feel it my duty to forward my resignation as [IOC] delegate for Spain.¹²

Baillet-Latour hastened to quell Güell's disappointment: 'I do not want to consider the project you are sharing with us [Güell's resignation] ... Neither in Barcelona nor in Lausanne can the services you have rendered be forgotten'.¹³ Confirmed in his position, Güell in turn summoned the SOC to avoid a resignation *en masse* and avert total disaster for the Spanish Olympic movement. He could not avoid, however, the departure of president Lamadrid, vice-president Jorge de Sarrástegui and member Josep Antoni Trabal, and had the bitter task of telling the remaining members that the new President of the Spanish Republic, Niceto Alcalá-Zamora, had rejected the honorary presidency that 'the SOC had agreed to offer him as proof of attachment to the [new] institutions'.¹⁴

In mid-June, Güell wrote to Baillet-Latour to let him know that he had withdrawn his resignation and that ‘an offensive against the National Olympic Committee had taken place’ but he ‘could resolve everything’, having received, to his ‘great astonishment’, only ‘expressions of consideration’ by the new authorities and the republican press ‘with no exception’.¹⁵ Several republican newspapers had indeed heavily criticized the SOC (minus Güell), on account of its alleged monarchism, during the weeks following the IOC Barcelona meeting.¹⁶ This hostility turned into a true anti-SOC campaign, lasting for many months, even years, and including dozens of harsh articles in such republican newspapers as *La Humanitat* (the mouthpiece of future president of the Catalan government, Lluís Companys), *Heraldo de Madrid* and *La Libertad*.

Despite the apparent good omens mentioned in Güell’s letter and the latter’s efforts,¹⁷ the relationship of the Spanish Olympic Movement with the new regime could hardly have got off to a worse start. The mutual incomprehension and lack of confidence would continue, especially with regard to the new regime’s more left-wing elements. In early 1932, the press announced the appointment of a governmental delegate in the SOC, charged with the task of ‘reviewing the accounts and checking how [the SOC] ... invests the amounts officially awarded to it’.¹⁸ However, when the first SOC meeting with the government’s representative finally took place in late April,¹⁹ its members were officially informed that Prime Minister Manuel Azaña had refused to grant even ‘a single penny’ to subsidise Spanish participation in the Los Angeles games to be held the following summer.²⁰ Consequently, the Spanish representation in Los Angeles was meagre, funded by the SOC with its savings from subsidies awarded by the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. The new authorities refused to grant the SOC even a yearly subsidy, which had amounted to 49,350 pesetas in the last two years of the Dictatorship.²¹

Despite this lack of governmental support, the SOC representative in the Los Angeles IOC Session confirmed Barcelona's candidacy to host the 1940 Olympics.²²

In the following months, the SOC kept being submitted to close scrutiny and harsh criticism for its alleged aristocratic/monarchic nature and lack of accountability. The fiercest attacks came from the Confederación Española de Atletismo, whose leaders, most notably Josep Antoni Trabal, president of the entity and personal secretary of the Catalan republican leader Lluís Companys,²³ had adopted a radical democratic stance and publicly lambasted the SOC for its alleged monarchism,²⁴ 'incompetence',²⁵ arrogance and opacity/corruption concerning the administration of its funds.²⁶ Güell reacted by making the SOC accounts public,²⁷ and above all, by reforming the SOC statutes to create a more democratic organization: 'From now on, every federation will appoint, not representatives, but delegates, and the delegates will be in charge of electing the members of the Committee'.²⁸

These efforts to adapt to the new political situation culminated in Güell's withdrawing to the background and the election of a pedigreed Republican, the Catalan physician and physiologist August Pi Sunyer (or Suñer), as the new president of the SOC in January 1933.²⁹ According to one of his biographers, Pi Sunyer's appointment was endorsed by his personal friend and minister in the provisional Republican government, Marcelino Domingo, who between April and December 1931 was in charge of the ministry of Public Education, responsible for sport and physical education.³⁰ This 'Republican move' kept alive the Spanish Olympic Movement's dream of hosting the 1940 games, and the candidacy of Barcelona was upheld in the IOC Oslo Session celebrated in late February 1935.³¹

The Thorny Road to Berlin 1936

As the 1936 games approached, though, the acute political instability in Spain, with no less than nine different cabinets formed between October 1934 and July 1936, cast a dark cloud over the SOC's Olympic aspirations. Throughout 1935 president Pi Sunyer and general secretary Josep Mesalles Estivill, backed by the IOC's Spanish members Güell and count of Valledano, pushed to engage the successive Spanish governments in guaranteeing the funds needed to send a Spanish team to the Berlin games.³² As long as the conservatives were in office (November 1933-February 1936), the SOC remained in good spirits. In April 1935, the press reported that the cabinet had agreed on the 'convenience of Spain not being out of the [Berlin] Games, and to this end the ministers of Public Education and State were requested to study the concrete formula that would allow for this participation'.³³ But in late July hopes began to fade, as the SOC was obliged to substantially downsize its plans in view of the financial 'restrictions' imposed by the government,³⁴ which according to Aragón represented half of the subsidy initially awarded.³⁵ In late October the situation had deteriorated even further, and Pi Sunyer publicly expressed his concern over Spain's participation in Berlin:

The Spanish Olympic Committee faces an embarrassing situation ... at present, we are unable to specify which sports will go to the Berlin Games, and even whether any of them will go at all ... we can have no certitude concerning any amounts granted to [subsidise] the participation.³⁶

The correspondence held in the IOC archives confirms the frustration and anxiety of the Spanish committee. In December 1935 Mesalles confessed to IOC founder and former president, Pierre de Coubertin: 'I have already spent about five months approaching the Spanish government with regard to our participation in the Berlin Games ... There is no

way we can resolve the affair ... each time the results are more doubtful and uncertain'.³⁷

A temporary reprieve came in January 1936, when the conservative government decided to grant a last-minute subsidy to secure Spanish attendance at the Garmish winter games. Pi Sunyer blamed the 'instability of the last governments' for the delay, and remained optimistic about the Berlin Olympics, which were not mentioned in the government's decision.³⁸ But the results of the February 16 general election extinguished these hopes, bringing into office a government representing the Frente Popular coalition, which was ideologically hostile to the 'aristocratic' Olympic movement in general, and specifically to the 'Nazi Olympics' of Berlin 1936, as lavishly reflected in several newspapers which acted as mouthpieces of parties belonging to the coalition, like *El Socialista* (PSOE) and *La Humanitat* (Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya).³⁹ SOC made a last-ditch effort to secure government funds in the following months, skirting around the thorny political implications of the games through assertions of apoliticism,⁴⁰ but they ultimately failed in their endeavour.

Following an intense anti-Berlin games campaign in several leftist newspapers, the new authorities eventually refused to grant the subsidy promised by the 1935 conservative governments to guarantee the Spanish participation in Berlin. Instead, the government granted 250.000 pesetas to the organisers of the anti-fascist Olimpiada Popular to be held in Barcelona in late July 1936,⁴¹ whose executive committee was incidentally chaired by Josep Antoni Trabal and was also granted a substantial subsidy by the Catalan regional government.⁴² The Spanish government's refusal to subsidise the expedition to Berlin was confirmed in the press in late June, which prompted the resignation of the entire SOC.⁴³ *El Mundo Deportivo* was swift to draw conclusions: 'Neither reasons of political nature, nor the strong campaign against Spanish

participation by journalistic elements and media close to those in command, are unrelated to this rejection'.⁴⁴

After all their efforts, the SOC faced again almost total failure.⁴⁵ In an attempt to salvage the situation, Güell was forced to make a comeback and in a meeting held on the first of July he refused to accept the committee's resignation, although president Pi Sunyer, who did not attend, communicated that his was 'irrevocable'.⁴⁶ In the following days, the press reported about scattered endeavours to send representatives to the games funded by individual federations.⁴⁷ However, the military coup of 17-18 July and subsequent outbreak of the Civil War put an abrupt end not only to these last-minute plans, but also to the Republican SOC itself, despite a timid attempt at reviving it in August 1937, as outlined below.

Military Coup, Revolutionary Violence and Disbanding of the Republican SOC

The eruption of war brought chaos, as massive political violence spread across the country. The military rebellion was bloodily stifled in Barcelona on July 19 and 20, after which the government's authority collapsed, and extremist revolutionary forces seized power. Mirroring what was happening in the 'other side', but with reverse political sense, a wave of repression was unleashed against those considered 'fascists', in which any individual known for their conservative political opinions or stances was a potential target, including of course those involved in the 'aristocratic' Spanish Olympic Movement.⁴⁸ According to the canonical research by Solé i Sabaté and Villarroya, 8,352 people were killed in Catalonia during the Civil War, victims of political/sectarian violence, 80% of which between July and December 1936.⁴⁹ In the early months of the

war, Italian and French boats evacuated from Barcelona no less than 12,400 refugees, and thousands escaped in British ships or through the Pyrenees.⁵⁰

The two IOC representatives in Spain had to almost literally run for their lives. As the speaker for the monarchic minority in the Spanish parliament, the count of Vallellano was in great danger, but he ‘miraculously saved his life’ and became an associate of the rebellious General Mola, who sent him to Portugal in August 1936. Franco later appointed him as head of the Francoist Spanish Red Cross.⁵¹

The specific circumstances of Santiago Güell’s escape are ignored so far; we know, on the other hand, that his brother, the also liberal-democrat count Juan Antonio Güell, had been ‘sentenced to death by the anarchists’ and fled to France aboard a British navy ship.⁵² Santiago Güell (unlike his brother) later joined the rebels in San Sebastián after the fall of this city into Franco’s arms in September 1936.⁵³ Both Güells were part of the massive exile of catalanist liberal-conservatives who fled Catalonia in the early months of the war to save their lives, including all the leaders of the conservative party Lliga Regionalista.⁵⁴ Lower rank members of the Lliga were much less fortunate, as no fewer than 281 of them were killed.⁵⁵

Some members of the SOC also suffered persecution and were forced to flee the Republican zone. This was the case of the delegate of the Spanish cycling federation and noted monarchist, Narciso Masferrer, who escaped to Elizondo, in Navarra, in late 1936,⁵⁶ but mainly the SOC general secretary, José Mesalles Estivill, and the resigned president, August Pi Sunyer.

Despite its lack of (known) political affiliation, Mesalles fled to Italy at some indeterminate moment.⁵⁷ He had good reasons to escape from revolutionary Barcelona, since he had repeatedly been denounced as a monarchist and a reactionary, not by the

anarchist extremists, but by the ‘moderate’ republican newspaper of the Catalan government’s president, Lluís Companys, which went to the extent of publishing this mafia-style threat: ‘He should be reminded of how his master [dictator Primo de Rivera] ended. He could end even worse’.⁵⁸

Pi Sunyer, despite being a noted Republican and the brother of Carles Pi Sunyer, a former Republican minister and mayor of Barcelona during the revolutionary period of the war, also felt under physical threat and moved to France, officially on an academic tour, from late 1936 to mid-1937.⁵⁹

My brother August ran an even higher risk, as he happened to be the president of the Spanish Olympic Committee, and some German antifascists embedded in the FAI organizations were plotting false accusations against him. The threat became so serious that I myself advised August to provisionally move to France ... What I found out later confirmed my certainty that, if he had failed to leave, it may have easily led to an irremediable tragedy.⁶⁰

Some of the army officials sent to Berlin to participate in the horse-riding competition were, allegedly, among the hardest hit by political violence, as according to a son of Pi Sunyer, they were shot dead in Barcelona after hastily returning from Berlin.⁶¹

One can only imagine the concern of the IOC members, who remained without news of the personal fate of their Spanish colleagues during the initial months of the war. The first precise information seems to have reached Lausanne through a letter sent in April 1937 by Mesalles, ‘a refugee in Italy’, to IOC secretary A. C. Berdez, who relayed it to Baillet-Latour.⁶² Proof of the chaos that had seized the Spanish Olympic Movement, Mesalles asked if Berdez had any idea of the whereabouts of Güell and Vallellano. ‘I have no news of our Spanish colleagues or knowledge of their addresses’, Baillet-

Latour replied to Berdez.⁶³ Shortly afterwards, the efficient Berdez wrote to the IOC president letting him know that ‘the address of the marquis of Vallelano [sic] is *aux bons soins* of the count of La Granja, Villa Hortensia, St. Jean de Luz, France’.⁶⁴

According to the minutes of the IOC Warsaw Session held in June 1937, Baillet-Latour was able to share ‘the news he had received’ from the absentee Spanish members.

It is crystal clear that right from the beginning the IOC felt solidarity with the members of the Spanish Olympic Movement who had fled the Republican zone. For instance, shortly after the Warsaw meeting, Berdez suggested to Baillet-Latour that the IOC ask Mesalles to do the Spanish translations for the entity’s official bulletin, as the latter had written from Italy wondering ‘whether ... [Berdez] could provide him with some little job, as the smallest earning would be very useful for him’. Berdez proposed that ‘the IOC could modestly pay him ... as in his times of prosperity Mesalles Estivill did [the translations] ... for free’.⁶⁵ The president accepted and in August the IOC paid Mesalles ‘300 lire ... some 70 Swiss francs’ for the work.⁶⁶

Meanwhile, direct news from the Republican SOC, or rather what remained of it, only arrived in Lausanne in late June 1937. The SOC vice-president and delegate of the Spanish Football Federation, José Rosich Rubiera, wrote to Berdez requesting several issues of the IOC official bulletin and asking for ‘the date in which the fee of our entity has to be paid to the International Committee, as well as the amount’.⁶⁷ Berdez replied swiftly and politely, sending the requested issues and reminding Rosich of what should have been obvious to him: ‘National Olympic committees do not have to pay membership fees to the IOC’.⁶⁸

In fact, as he himself stated, Rosich had sent the letter at the request of the Republican Consejo Nacional de Educación Física y Deportes (CNEFD), a body created in May 1937 to place elite sport under government control, among other remits.⁶⁹ One of the

aims of the CNEFD was precisely to help the struggling Spanish sports federations pay their membership fees to the international federations, and thus avoid the risk of losing their international rights in favour of their hypothetical or existing Francoist counterparts.⁷⁰ The only meeting of the remaining members of the Republican SOC during the war took place in Barcelona on August 27, arguably prompted by the CNEFD policy of reviving the Republican sport institutional structure, under the chairmanship of vice-president Rosich, as Pi Sunyer did not attend.⁷¹

Rosich's letter, whose purpose was essentially to transmit a sign of life, was unlikely to have impressed the IOC leaders. He also sent a wire to Berdez to express condolences for the death of Pierre de Coubertin on September 2.⁷² These are the only messages sent from a member of the Republican SOC during the Civil War with documental proof in the IOC archives. Significantly, the notes published in the Spanish republican press about the death of Coubertin did not mention the SOC at all, as happened for the entire period of the war.⁷³ On receiving the wire, Baillet-Latour sent Berdez this instruction, highly revealing about his political views: 'Before answering the Spanish committee, consult Mesalles on the signatures of the Spanish OC's wire, and if it is from the reds, send them nothing'.⁷⁴

Franco's Olympic Move and Fading of the Republican SOC

These sporadic messages from Barcelona arrived in Lausanne precisely as the Francoists were about to make their Olympic move. The day after replying to Rosich, Berdez wrote to Baillet-Latour: 'Spanish OC ... It will surely request its address to be changed in the bulletin list',⁷⁵ indicating he had already been warned that the SOC was

about to be reconstituted by the rebels. Official confirmation duly arrived in a letter Mesalles sent from San Sebastián dated late October:

Given the fact that a considerable majority of the sportsmen are at present in Nationalist Spain and that, on the other hand, the ensemble of the federations that are still ... nominally based in the red zone, including the SOC bureau, are actually ... legally lacking statutory guidance (mainly due to revolutionary interventions and seizures), the Spanish IOC delegation, according to the Olympic principles and rules, and after consultation with the truly qualified sporting representatives, is in the process of reconstituting the SOC.⁷⁶

Barely one month later, the baron of Güell, the rebel General José Moscardó, and Mesalles sent Berdez a letter informing that: ‘According to our entity’s statutes, we have decided: (1) To dissolve the SOC appointed for the games of the XI Olympiad. (2) The constitution ... of a new Spanish Olympic Committee’, which would be chaired by Moscardó, with Güell and Vallengano as vice-presidents and Mesalles as general secretary. The three signees asked Berdez to ‘take note of these decisions and of the provisional headquarters of the new entity’ in San Sebastián.⁷⁷ This time, Berdez replied swiftly and warmly: ‘I am very glad to hear from you and to know that the Spanish Olympic Committee is being reorganised ... I hope everything will work out according to your wishes’.⁷⁸ Berdez also received the green light from Baillet-Latour to change the SOC’s address in the *Bulletin Officiel du Comité International Olympique* ‘without taking into account the other Spanish Olympic Committee based in Barcelona’,⁷⁹ in the January 1938 issue (n. 36) this is given as Churruca street n. 2, San Sebastián, both for Spanish IOC members and the SOC itself.⁸⁰

The Francoist press was quick to boast about the IOC’s recognition of the new committee.⁸¹ Jacinto Miquelarena, the new SOC’s information and propaganda director,

claimed that Baillet-Latour had written to Güell or Moscardó (not clarified) to compliment them: ‘You tell me that in the field of sport, like in every other, victorious Spain is reorganizing itself without wasting time. I take good note of your statements and seize the opportunity to let you know again how anxious I have felt while following the tragic stages of General Franco’s glorious saga’.⁸² A copy of this letter is not kept in the IOC archives, although there is proof that Baillet-Latour sent his compliments to the Francoist SOC, as Mesalles acknowledged receipt of a ‘letter of December 3 signed by the president which has been forwarded to the baron of Güell and later to the count of Vallellano’, both of whom ‘are very grateful for the words’ Baillet-Latour addressed to them.⁸³

From that moment on, there is no trace of the Republican SOC in the IOC archives or in the Spanish press of either side. The last proof of its existence is Berdez’s mention to the wire of condolence sent in early September 1937. In fact, for the rest of the war period, the IOC archives contain little more from the Francoist side. We could find only one other letter, dated August 1938, sent by Vallellano in reply to Baillet-Latour, in which he acknowledged receiving ‘information about the Games of the XII Olympiad to be held in Helsinki’ and informed that they were ‘in the process of organizing the Spanish Olympic Committee in Nationalist Spain’.⁸⁴ This statement may seem surprising, given that the organization of the Francoist SOC had been announced nine months before, but an exploration of the Francoist press of the time indicates that in November 1937 it was little more than a list of names on a piece of paper. Regardless, during 1938 it repeatedly gave signs of life: it officially held its constitutive meeting in Saragossa on February 11, 1938 and paid a visit to Franco in March.⁸⁵ The Francoist press regularly mentioned it throughout the year.

In early August 1938, a Francoist newspaper mentioned the forthcoming ‘appointment of a Spanish Olympic Committee’,⁸⁶ in line with Vallellano’s announcement to Baillet-Latour. What this in fact meant is that the Francoist government was about to officialise the SOC, enabled by a decree of the ministry of National Education ‘on the constitution and recognition of the Spanish Olympic Committee as the National Sports Council’.⁸⁷ This further demonstrates the proactivity and involvement of the Francoist government concerning Olympism and, more generally, mainstream (‘bourgeois’) sport, as opposed to the republicans’ apathy.⁸⁸

However, even after this official recognition, the president of the SOC himself, General Moscardó, acknowledged in an interview published in December 1938 that they were ‘still at the beginning and, despite having already held some meetings, the truth is that these have consisted in exchanging points of view in order to decide on the plans’.

Moscardó was also frank concerning the nature of the new entity: ‘Everything depends on the State. There will be delegates from every ministry ... We will appoint the presidents of the federations ... there will be no more assemblies, disputes, sporting politicking and elections with picturesque fighting for positions’.⁸⁹ This interventionist, authoritarian and top-down design, which in fact turned the SOC into a mere brand embedded in a governmental entity, does not seem to have bothered the IOC in the slightest.⁹⁰

Bigger Troubles for the IOC in 1938

With no Olympic appointment in sight and the country immersed in the final stages of the Civil War, the Francoist SOC, once ‘created’ (November 1937), officialised (August 1938), and recognised by the IOC, remained in a purely nominal state. For the IOC, the

Spanish dossier was also among the least of its preoccupations in this stormy period of its existence. Once it was confirmed that the IOC's two Spanish delegates and all the members of the SOC, including Mesalles and Pi Sunyer, had survived the catastrophic first months of the war, and that the committee had been reconstituted in 'friendly' hands, the Spanish question faded into the background. The attention of Baillet-Latour and Berdez was instead focussed on the three major crises that beset the IOC in 1938: the threat hanging over the 1940 Tokyo Olympics due to the ongoing Sino-Japanese war, the entity's financial difficulties, and last but not least, Berdez's serious health problems.

Berdez alluded to the precarious state of his health in a letter sent in mid-February 1938 to Baillet-Latour, in which he informed the IOC president that medical concerns prohibited him from attending the IOC Cairo Session scheduled for March: 'For the first time since 1925, I will not be there to try and help you with the myriad of tiny details, and chiefly with the minutes'.⁹¹ As his health did not improve in the following months, the IOC's general secretary proffered his resignation, which Baillet-Latour refused to accept, instead appointing the 'Nazi spy'⁹² Werner Klingeberg as Berdez's assistant in November 1938.⁹³ But Berdez's health worsened and he eventually died in 1940. To add insult to injury, in December Baillet-Latour's personal secretary was 'seized by a very serious internal bleeding' which left him with little hopes of recovery.⁹⁴

The Japanese issue was one of the star items of the March 1938 Cairo Session, after which the IOC president wrote a letter to the Japanese Olympic representatives prince Tokugawa, professor Kano, count Soyeshima and Dr. Nagai, calling their attention to 'the dangers and responsibilities the Japanese Olympic Committee will have to face if the hostilities are not over by the time the 1940 Games are celebrated in Tokyo'.⁹⁵ The IOC's fears were fulfilled in July 1938, when the Tokyo organizing committee

announced the cancellation of the 1940 Tokio games ‘owing to the present national situation’, as stated in a wire sent to Berdez.⁹⁶

In the reviewed documentation, the IOC’s financial troubles are mentioned for the first time in Berdez’s correspondence with Baillet-Latour shortly after he first mentioned his deteriorating health: ‘I cannot but remain worried about the situation at the end of 1937’. One of his concerns was the overdue yearly membership fees which IOC individual members contributed to the entity, which incidentally included those of Güell (1936 and 1937) and Vallellano (every year since he became a member in 1931).⁹⁷ In the minutes of the 6th IOC Session held in Cairo from March 13 to 18, Baillet-Latour stated that ‘the financial situation has become more difficult due to the devaluation of certain currencies’. Concerning the defaulting IOC members, he announced that ‘those who fail to remain in touch with the IOC for two years will be considered to have resigned’. In a written account of the Cairo meeting sent to Berdez, the president warned: ‘We are going to become very strict about the overdue fees’.⁹⁸

Serious as these problems were for the IOC, 1939 brought even worse perspectives. The outbreak of World War II brought their plans to a halt,⁹⁹ to the extent that in December Baillet-Latour wrote to Berdez in a sombre and depressed tone: ‘The IOC’s activity has ceased. Will it ever resume?’. This letter is of great interest, as it is the document examined in this research in which the IOC’s president more openly expresses his anti-communist and anti-semitic political opinions, and therefore deserves to be quoted in some length:

This war is a disaster, and one cannot understand how a minority of bright sparks, on both sides, have been able to throw themselves so lightly into an adventure which ... will entail the ruin of Europe ... bringing as a consequence universal bolshevism. It is, in fact, the Bolsheviks who have been trying for 20

years to trigger it to their benefit. The Jews have helped them with all their might ... If peace is not reached before everybody is so weakened that they will lack the energy and the means to march together against the USSR, Europe is doomed.¹⁰⁰

Conclusions

This last quotation will not come as a surprise for historians of the Olympic Movement, as it is well documented that the IOC, since its creation by baron Pierre de Coubertin in 1894, was an aristocratic, conservative and elitist entity hostile to radical democratic principles¹⁰¹ which during the Thirties and early Forties openly flirted with Nazi-fascist regimes.¹⁰² For this reason, it is also unsurprising that the IOC recognised the Francoist SOC when it was set up in the middle of the Civil War (November 1937), especially if we bear in mind the mutual mistrust that had troubled the relationship between the Spanish Olympic Movement and the progressive Second Republic established in 1931.

Our interpretation of these facts, which departs from the predominant scholarly view, is twofold. On the one hand, the IOC *did the right thing*, not in a moral or ideological sense, but from a purely statutory perspective. On the other hand, the IOC did not actually choose between a Francoist and Republican SOC, as the latter had ceased to exist, *de facto* in July 1936 and *de iure* in November 1937, when the Francoist SOC was created. In other words, according to the IOC statutes, there was no choice to be made, and therefore the IOC *betrayed* nobody in this particular affair.

Indeed, to properly assess the IOC's management of the Spanish question during the Civil War, one must bear in mind that it was not a democratically constituted, bottom-up entity, unlike (at least on paper) the FIFA or other international federations, which

were set up as international associations of national federations, the source of their legitimacy. On the contrary, the international Olympic Movement was a top-down, elitist organization whose supreme body, the IOC, was not elective, but self-constituted. New members were chosen by co-optation and did not represent their nations or any particular sport, rather the opposite:

There are no representatives in the IOC. The members do not represent their countries; they even formally commit to not accepting any sort of mandate from their countries. They must consider themselves as IOC ambassadors vis-à-vis their compatriots. Once appointed, they are permanent.¹⁰³

In this sense, the IOC did not derive its legitimacy from the National Olympic Committees (NOC) nor the national or international sports federations. According to the IOC statutes, the NOC were *de iure* subordinate structures, a sort of national subsidiary of the international body, as clearly stated in the 1920 IOC statutes:

Every Olympic committee which is constituted by the member or members of the International Committee for the incumbent country, or in agreement with them, is considered to be a recognised national committee. The recognition lasts as long as the agreement between them does. If and when they [the IOC members] inform the International Committee that this agreement has ceased to exist, the recognition ceases ipso facto.¹⁰⁴

The 1924 version of the statutes, in force in 1937-38, stipulated that ‘the national committees must be set up both in agreement with the federations or national entities of the country and with the members of the International Committee for this country’.¹⁰⁵ In short, the very existence of a national committee depended on the will of the IOC’s national delegate(s), not the other way round.

Back to the Spanish case, in accordance with the IOC statutes, as soon as the IOC's Spanish delegates reconstituted the SOC in San Sebastián and communicated the news to Lausanne, the Republican SOC legally ceased to exist, although Berdez himself showed he was not fully aware of this when in a letter to Baillet-Latour he referred to 'the other Spanish Olympic Committee based in Barcelona'.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, the Republican SOC disappeared *de iure* in November 1937 but, as explained above, it had been disbanded *de facto* after July 1936, when its resigned president and its general secretary were exiled in France and Italy, respectively. The only known activity of the Republican SOC, or rather what was left of it, throughout the war were Rosich's letter and wire to Berdez in late August 1937, a nominal, token move instigated by the Republican government.

By recognizing the Francoist SOC, the IOC was indeed following its conservative instincts and desires, yet it was also abiding by its legal statutes, and therefore *in this respect* its behaviour was technically correct. It is also noteworthy that although the Francoists boasted about their recognition by the IOC (making public the contents of personal correspondence from Baillet-Latour), the committee was extremely discrete in this regard. The only public references to it we could find in our research are the change of the SOC's address in the January 1938 issue of the IOC *Bulletin Officiel*, and a vague allusion by Baillet-Latour to the SOC and its general secretary Mesalles, 'a refugee in San Sebastián', in a Belgian newspaper.¹⁰⁷ There is no trace of the affair in the debates held during the successive IOC sessions in Berlin, Warsaw and Cairo (July 1936, June 1937 and March 1938, respectively), according to their minutes.

Beyond the technical-legal aspect of the affair, what also stands out is the apathy of the Republican government and political parties vis-à-vis 'its' SOC, resulting from the Frente Popular parties' bid for 'popular/workers sport' since early 1936 and disdain for

‘bourgeois/aristocratic Olympism’, as opposed to the proactivism of the Francoists in the latter field. In other words, the Francoists *had a plan* vis-à-vis the Spanish Olympic Committee and international Olympism; the republicans did not.

This made the IOC decision to recognize the Francoist SOC much easier. One can only conjecture what would have happened if, instead of ignoring ‘its’ SOC during the war and allowing it to disappear, the republican government would have promoted its reconstitution in 1937 and stimulated its international activity, including frequent correspondence with the IOC and other National Olympic Committees. Probably the IOC would have still supported the Francoists, but it would have been far more arduous for them to stand by this decision in front of the international public opinion. The early recognition of the Francoist SOC therefore resulted from the coincidence of four factors: the IOC’s ideological proximity to the rebels, the IOC regulations concerning the creation and recognition of NOCs, the proactivity and initiative of the Francoists in the international sporting front (not just Olympism), and the Republican government’s ideological bid for ‘workers sport’ and the resulting failure to effectively protect and promote ‘its’ SOC, and ‘bourgeois sport’ more generally, as a tool of international prestige, diplomacy and propaganda.¹⁰⁸

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¹ See, for instance, Xavier Pujadas and Carles Santacana, *Història il·lustrada de l'esport a Catalunya* (Barcelona: Diputació de Barcelona and Columna, 2005); Xavier Pujadas, 'Entre estadios y trincheras. El deporte y la Guerra Civil en Cataluña (1936-1939)', in *Actas del X Congreso de Historia del Deporte* (Sevilla: Comité Europeo de Historia del Deporte / Universidad Pablo de Olavide, 2005); Xavier Pujadas, 'Les combats du sport républicain dans la guerre civile espagnole: mobilisation intérieure et reconnaissance internationale'. *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps* 106 (2012); Andrés Domínguez and Xavier Pujadas, 'Estadios y trincheras. Deporte y retaguardia en la guerra civil, 1936-1939', in *Atletas y ciudadanos*, ed. Xavier Pujadas (Madrid: Alianza, 2011); Conrado Durántez, *El centenario del Comité Olímpico Español. Un siglo de olimpismo* (Madrid: Comité Olímpico Español, 2013); Fernando Arrechea, *España y los Juegos Olímpicos. Análisis de participación de los deportistas españoles en los JJOO de la Era Moderna e historia del movimiento olímpico español* (PhD dissertation, Universidad Católica de Murcia, 2017); Julian Rieck, 'Football as Alternative Diplomacy During the Civil War', in *Desde la capital de la República: nuevas perspectivas y estudios sobre la guerra civil española*, ed. Sergio Valero Gómez and Marta García Garrión (Valencia: Universitat de València, 2018), 231-246; Alberto Aragón Pérez, *Santiago Güell i López. El primer català al Comitè Olímpic Internacional* (Barcelona: Fundació Barcelona Olímpica, 2013); Alberto Aragón Pérez, 'El renacimiento de un COE con acento barcelonés: dictadura de Primo de Rivera y la II República (1921-1936)', in *El olimpismo en España. Una mirada histórica de los orígenes a la actualidad* (Barcelona: Fundación Barcelona Olímpica, 2019), 67-94; Enrico Castro Montes, 'Ambassadeurs op het sportfront. Sport, politiek en diplomatie tijdens de Spaanse Burgeroorlog (1936-1939)', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 133, no. 4 (2021), 639-658.

² Aragón, 'El renacimiento de un COE', 244.

³ Rieck, 'Football as alternative diplomacy'.

⁴ Castro Montes, 'Ambassadeurs op het sportfront'.

⁵ Email sent by the SOC secretariat to the author, December 22, 2022.

⁶ 'Ante el próximo Congreso Olímpico Internacional que se celebrará en Barcelona', *La Vanguardia*, March 22, 1931, 19. The mouthpiece of conservative Catalanism, *La Veu de Catalunya*, remained in high spirits concerning the Barcelona candidacy even after the advent of the new regime: 'We are entitled to a great victory, which would be the highest honour for our country and the culmination of [our] task'. 'Olímpiques. El comitè internacional', *La Veu de Catalunya*, April 23, 8.

⁷ 'La reunión del COI. La última sesión', *La Vanguardia*, April 28, 1931, 18.

⁸ Minutes of the IOC Barcelona Session, April 25-26, 1931, IOC archives. In his memoirs, the leader of the main Catalanist conservative party, Francesc Cambó (who also fled to Paris these days), confesses his 'terror' at the possibility of the political revolution unleashing a violent, social one, as eventually happened five years later. See Francesc Cambó, *Memòries (1876-1936)* (Barcelona: laButxaca, 2008).

⁹ Pujadas and Santacana, *Història il·lustrada*.

¹⁰ 'Sesión de constitución del Comité Olímpico Español', *La Vanguardia*, April 29, 1930, 24.

¹¹ Minutes of the IOC Barcelona Session, April 25-26, 1931, IOC archives.

¹² Letter from Güell to Baillet-Latour, May 3, 1931. All letters cited in this article are kept in the IOC archives at Lausanne, unless otherwise stated.

¹³ Letter from Baillet-Latour to Güell, May 14, 1931.

¹⁴ 'Olimpismo. Última reunión del Comité Olímpico Español', *La Vanguardia*, May 31, 1931, 16.

¹⁵ Letter from Güell to Baillet-Latour, June 12, 1931.

¹⁶ See, for instance, *La Rambla*, May 4, 1931, 5; *La Libertad*, May 6, 1931, 4; *El Liberal*, May 9, 1931, 4; *Heraldo de Madrid*, May 26, 1931, 12; *El Sol*, May 28, 1931, 6.

¹⁷ Güell undertook the provisory chairmanship of the SOC until December 1932. 'Olimpismo. La nueva constitución del Comité Olímpico Español', *La Vanguardia*, December 24, 1932, 14.

¹⁸ 'Esta noche se reúne el Comité Olímpico Español', *El Mundo Deportivo*, March 3, 1932, 1.

¹⁹ 'El Comité Olímpico ha hecho pública la nota de su reunión del jueves', *El Mundo Deportivo*, May 1, 1932, 1.

²⁰ 'La ida de España a los Juegos Olímpicos está más que verde', *El Mundo Deportivo*, April 13, 1932, 1.

²¹ 'El Comité Olímpico Español da cuenta de su última reunión y facilita los datos de orden económico anunciados', *El Mundo Deportivo*, May 26, 1932, 1.

²² Aragón, 'El renacimiento de un COE'; Durántez, *El centenario del Comité*.

²³ 'Josep Antoni Trabal i Sans', <https://memoriaesguerra.cat/biografies/trabal-sans-josep-antoni>, consulted November 2023.

²⁴ See, for instance, Roger, 'Una nova atzagaiada del Comitè Olímpic Espanyol', *La Humanitat*, May 27, 1932, 2; 'La Confederació Espanyola d'Atletisme referma les seves acusacions', *La Humanitat*, June 7, 1932, 8.

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- ²⁵ 'La Confederación Española de Atletismo no permite la participación de sus afiliados en los Juegos Olímpicos', *El Mundo Deportivo*, April 20, 1932, 1.
- ²⁶ 'La confederación Española de Atletismo contrareplica al Comité Olímpico Español', *El Mundo Deportivo*, May 4, 1932, 1.
- ²⁷ 'El Comité Olímpico Español da cuenta de su última reunión y facilita los datos de orden económico anunciados', *El Mundo Deportivo*, May 26, 1932, 1.
- ²⁸ 'El CO Español ha reformado sus estatutos', *El Mundo Deportivo*, December 15, 1932, 1.
- ²⁹ Pujadas and Santacana, *Història il·lustrada*; 'Toma de posesión de cargos en el Comité Olímpico Español', *La Vanguardia*, January 15, 1933, 16. According to Aragón ('El renacimiento de un COE'), August Pi Sunyer was already a member of the SOC, but it seems that the actual member was his brother Josep Maria, representing the swimming federation. 'Sesión de constitución del Comité Olímpico Español', *La Vanguardia*, April 29, 1930, 24.
- ³⁰ Jacint Corbella, 'August Pi i Sunyer (1897-1965). La seva biografia', in *Centenari de la naixença d'August Pi i Sunyer. Actes commemoratius* (Barcelona, 1989).
- ³¹ Arrechea, *España y los Juegos*.
- ³² See, for instance, 'El Comité Olímpico Español visita al señor Lerroux', *La Vanguardia*, March 28, 1935, 14.
- ³³ 'España irá a los JO de Berlín', *El Mundo Deportivo*, April 11, 1935, 1. The Spanish participation in the games was agreed in the Cabinet meetings of April 26 and May 21, 1935. 'El presidente del C. Olímpico Español, Dr. Augusto Pi y Suñer... precisa la actual situación respecto a la participación española en los juegos 1936', *El Mundo Deportivo*, October 30, 1935, 1.
- ³⁴ 'Los últimos acuerdos del Comité Olímpico Español', *La Vanguardia*, July 25, 1935, 10.
- ³⁵ Aragón, 'El renacimiento de un COE'.
- ³⁶ 'El presidente del C. Olímpico Español'.
- ³⁷ Letter from Mesalles to Pierre de Coubertin, December 7, 1935.
- ³⁸ 'De momento se va a Garmisch y tengo la esperanza de que también se irá a Berlín...', *El Mundo Deportivo*, January 26, 1936, 1.
- ³⁹ See, for instance, 'Las sociedades obreras ante la Olimpiada de Berlín', *El Socialista* March 12, 1936, 5; 'Perquè [sic] som contraris de la participació als Jocs Olímpics de Berlín', *La Humanitat*, June 5, 1936, 9.
- ⁴⁰ See for instance, 'Olimpismo. La última reunión del Comité Olímpico Español', *La Vanguardia*, March 28, 1936, 14; 'Olimpismo. La última reunión del Comité Olímpico Español', *El Mundo Deportivo*, June 22, 1936, 7.
- ⁴¹ 'Tras amplia deliberación se acordaron las líneas generales del laudo del ministro de trabajo sobre el conflicto de la construcción', *El Socialista*, July 4, 1936, 3.
- ⁴² 'Ha quedado constituido el Comité ejecutivo de la Olimpiada', *El Socialista*, May 28, 1936, 5.
- ⁴³ 'El govern espanyol ha denegat la subvenció per als jocs olímpics de Berlín', *La Humanitat*, June 27, 1936, 9.
- ⁴⁴ 'Olimpismo. Ya es un hecho. El gobierno español no da un céntimo... para que vaya ninguna representación civil a los Juegos de Berlín'. *El Mundo Deportivo*, June 27, 1936, 2.
- ⁴⁵ The press reported about the War Ministry subsidizing the participation of a military team in the Berlin horse riding competition. 'Se confirma la participación de los equipos españoles de hípica militar en los JO de Berlín', *El Mundo Deportivo*, June 28, 1936, 1.
- ⁴⁶ 'Olimpismo. La nota oficial del COE sobre su sesión del miércoles', *El Mundo Deportivo*, July 3, 1936, 2.
- ⁴⁷ 'El "yatchman" Pedro Pi, del Marítimo, representante español en mono tipo "star"', *El Mundo Deportivo*, July 10, 1936, 5; 'El donostiarra Sarasua al batir al catalán Mora queda clasificado para ir a Berlín', July 19, 1936, 2.
- ⁴⁸ Carlos Sentís, 'Catalanes en San Sebastián', in *Cataluña en la Guerra Civil Española* (Barcelona: La Vanguardia, 1986).
- ⁴⁹ Josep Maria Solé i Sabaté, Joan Villarroya, *La repressió a la rereguarda de Catalunya (1936-1939)* (Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1989).
- ⁵⁰ J. L. Alcofar Nassaes, *La marina italiana en la guerra de España* (Barcelona: Euros, 1975), 317-318; Solé i Sabaté and Villarroya, *La repressió a la rereguarda*, 184.
- ⁵¹ Pedro Montoliú Camps, *Madrid en la guerra civil: la historia* (Madrid: Silex Ediciones, 1998); 'Ha muerto el conde de Vallellano', *ABC*, September 8, 1964, 29.
- ⁵² Comte de Güell, *Journal d'un expatrié catalan* (Monaco: Éditions du Rocher, 1946).
- ⁵³ Aragón, 'El renacimiento de un COE'.
- ⁵⁴ Albert Manent, '1936. Com se salvaren els prohoms de la Lliga', *Serra d'Or* 333 (1987).
- ⁵⁵ Solé i Sabaté and Villarroya, *La repressió a la rereguarda*, 444.

- ⁵⁶ ‘Narciso Masferrer ha muerto’, *El Mundo Deportivo*, April 10, 1941, 1; César Mora, ‘Narciso Masferrer, organizador de los primeros Salones Internacionales del Automóvil’, *La Vanguardia*, February 3, 1970, 41. Masferrer had substituted Manuel F. Creus as delegate of the Unión Velocipédica Española in March 1935; see ‘Olimpismo. La última reunión del Comité Olímpico Español’, *El Mundo Deportivo*, March 20, 1935, 2. According to the popular cycling journalist Ramon Torres, Masferrer was denounced as a monarchist and he barely saved his life because the leftist militiamen who searched his house recognised him as ‘the president of bicycles’ (R. Torres, ‘Semblanza de D. Narciso Masferrer Sala’, *El Mundo Deportivo*, September 6, 1968, 20).
- ⁵⁷ Letter from Mesalles to Berdez, April 18, 1937.
- ⁵⁸ Untitled short text, *La Humanitat*, November 26, 1931, 4. Primo de Rivera suddenly died in Paris in March 1930, shortly after his resignation.
- ⁵⁹ Pere Pi-Sunyer i Bayo, *Del vell i del nou món. Memòries* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1992); ‘La cultura catalana en el extranjero’, *La Vanguardia*, April 29, 1937, 3; ‘Estudios científicos. Universitarios catalanes en el extranjero’, *La Vanguardia*, June 27, 1937, 3.
- ⁶⁰ Carles Pi i Sunyer, *La república y la guerra: memorias de un político catalán* (México: Oasis, 1975).
- ⁶¹ Pi-Sunyer, *Del vell i del nou món*.
- ⁶² Letter from Berdez to Baillet-Latour, April 18, 1937.
- ⁶³ Letter from Baillet-Latour to Berdez, April 21, 1937.
- ⁶⁴ Letter from Berdez to Baillet-Latour, May 8, 1937.
- ⁶⁵ Letter from Berdez to Baillet-Latour, June 21, 1937.
- ⁶⁶ Letter from Berdez-Baillet-Latour, August 21, 1937.
- ⁶⁷ Letter from Rosich to Berdez, June 24, 1937.
- ⁶⁸ Letter from Berdez to Rosich, July 12, 1937.
- ⁶⁹ *Gaceta de la República*, May 28, 1937.
- ⁷⁰ ‘Polisportiva. La excelente labor del Consejo Nacional de Educación Física y Deportes’. *El Mundo Deportivo*, October 20, 1937, 1. This risk was real concerning football, as the Francoists had set up a parallel federation in San Sebastián in June 1937.
- ⁷¹ Duránte, *El centenario del Comité Olímpico Español*. Pujadas and Santacana (*Història il·lustrada de l’esport a Catalunya*) and Domínguez and Pujadas (‘Estadios y trincheras’) mention an earlier SOC meeting allegedly held in July 19 1937 under the chairmanship of Pi Sunyer, but this seems unlikely as, according to COE’s official historian, Conrado Duránte, the minutes of the August 27 meeting mention that the committee ‘had not met since the games of the XI Olympiad [Berlin]’ (Duránte, *El centenario del Comité*, 165), and on the other hand, Pi Sunyer had abandoned all Olympic activity after his ‘irrevocable’ resignation one year before (see above) and no letters from him are kept in the IOC archives. Furthermore, Pi Sunyer was in Paris in early August 1937 (‘Nota remitida desde París por Ángel Ossorio, embajador en París, a José Giral, ministro de Estado, relativa a la opinión sobre la situación de España que mantenía Augusto Pi Suñer’, August 5, 1937, Archivo Histórico Nacional, pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/show/6351055), although this does not arguably exclude the possibility of him having been in Barcelona in late July. Olympic historian Alberto Aragón also claims that the late August 1937 meeting was the only one held by the Republican SOC during the war (Aragón, ‘El renacimiento de un COE’).
- ⁷² Letter from Berdez to Baillet-Latour, September 5, 1937.
- ⁷³ ‘La muerte del barón de Coubertin’, *El Mundo Deportivo*, September 5, 1937, 1; ‘El fallecimiento del barón Pierre de Coubertin’, *La Vanguardia*, September 4, 1937, 3.
- ⁷⁴ Letter from Baillet-Latour to Berdez, September 14, 1937.
- ⁷⁵ Letter from Berdez to Baillet-Latour, July 13, 1937.
- ⁷⁶ Letter from Mesalles to Berdez, October 23, 1937.
- ⁷⁷ Letter from Güell, Moscardó and Mesalles to Berdez, November 20, 1937.
- ⁷⁸ Letter from Berdez to Mesalles, December 14, 1937.
- ⁷⁹ Letter from Berdez to Baillet-Latour, December 16, 1937.
- ⁸⁰ The following issues of the bulletin, including its successor, the *Olympische Rundschau*, keep this address until issue number 6 of the latter (July 1939, when the Civil War was over), when it changes for the one of the definitive Madrid headquarters.
- ⁸¹ See, for instance, J. Miquelarena, ‘Reorganización del Comité Olímpico Español’, *ABC* (Sevilla edition), December 26, 1937, 17; ‘Notas del block’, *El Diario Vasco*, January 9, 1938, 4.
- ⁸² J. Miquelarena, ‘Reorganización del Comité Olímpico Español’, *ABC* (Sevilla edition), December 26, 1937, 17.
- ⁸³ Letter from Mesalles to Berdez, December 31, 1937.
- ⁸⁴ Letter from Vallengano to Baillet-Latour, August 19, 1938.

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- ⁸⁵ Duránte, *El centenario del Comité Olímpico Español*, 168; 'Les nationaux espagnols vont réorganiser le Comité Olympique', *La Nation Belge*, March 22, 1938, 7.
- ⁸⁶ 'Sobre la creación de un Comité Olímpico Español', *El Ideal Gallego*, August 2, 1938, 1.
- ⁸⁷ *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, August 29, 1938, n. 60.
- ⁸⁸ Concerning the Francoists' policy regarding football, see Bernat López, 'Recognition, *Ma Non Troppo*: How FIFA Dribbled the Spanish Football Schism During the Civil War'. *Soccer and Society*, forthcoming.
- ⁸⁹ Quoted in Duránte, *El centenario del Comité*, 171-172.
- ⁹⁰ Duránte, *El centenario del Comité*; Aragón, 'El renacimiento de un COE'.
- ⁹¹ Letter from Berdez to Baillet-Latour, February 14, 1938.
- ⁹² Patrick Clastres, 'Neutralité politique, compromissions avec le régime nazi, continuité olympique. Les présidents successifs du CIO (1925-1972) au défi des Jeux de Berlin', in *Sport, corps et sociétés de masse. Le projet d'un homme nouveau*, ed. George Bensoussan et al. (Paris: Armand Colin, 2011), 215.
- ⁹³ Letter from Baillet-Latour to Berdez, November 17, 1938.
- ⁹⁴ Letter from Baillet-Latour to Berdez, December 21, 1938.
- ⁹⁵ Letter from Baillet-Latour to prince Tokugawa, professor Kano, count Soyeshima and Dr. Nagai, March 1938.
- ⁹⁶ Letter from Berdez to Baillet-Latour, July 21, 1938.
- ⁹⁷ Letter from Berdez to Baillet-Latour, March 1, 1938.
- ⁹⁸ Letter from Baillet-Latour to Berdez, March 18, 1938.
- ⁹⁹ Philippe Vonnard and Grégory Quin, 'Promouvoir et jouer au football pendant la guerre', *Hispania Nova. Revista de historia contemporánea* 17 (2019), 306-340.
- ¹⁰⁰ Letter from Baillet-Latour to Berdez, December 9, 1939.
- ¹⁰¹ Florence Carpentier, 'Le conflit entre le CIO et la FIFA dans l'entre-deux-guerres. Les Jeux olympiques contre la Coupe du Monde de football', *STAPS* 68 (2005), 25-39. This hostility is openly expressed, for instance, in a letter Baillet-Latour sent to Coubertin in early 1926 where the former lambasted 'democracy and parliamentarism' as having 'brought ruin to societies' (Letter from Baillet-Latour to Coubertin, January 31, 1926).
- ¹⁰² Matti Goksøyr, 'The Rings and the Swastika: Political Ambiguity in Sport before and during Second World War', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 36, no. 11 (2019), 998-1012; Vonnard and Quin, 'Promouvoir et jouer au football'.
- ¹⁰³ Comité International Olympique, 'Le CIO et les Fédérations Internationales', *Bulletin Officiel du CIO* 3 (July 1926).
- ¹⁰⁴ Comité International Olympique, *Comité International Olympique* (Lausanne: Imprimeries Réunies SA, 1920), 9.
- ¹⁰⁵ Internationales Olympisches Institut, *Olympische Gesetze / Règles Olympiques / Olympic Rules* (Berlin: Wilhelm Limpert-Verlag, 1938), 27.
- ¹⁰⁶ Letter from Berdez to Baillet-Latour, December 16, 1937.
- ¹⁰⁷ 'Les Espagnols et le CIO', *Les Sports*, October 22, 1938, 6.
- ¹⁰⁸ As reflected, for instance, in the passivity of the Republican government vis-à-vis the participation of a Spanish national team in the 1937 Tour de France, or in its neglect of the (Republican) Spanish Football Federation. See, respectively, Bernat López, 'Propaganda on Two Wheels: The Spanish Republican Team in the 1937 Tour de France'. *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 36, no. 2-3 (2019); López, 'Recognition, *Ma Non Troppo*'.