

The role of sport in the totalitarian regime of Metaxas in Greece (1936-1941) compared to National Socialism in Germany

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Summary. *The regime of Metaxas (1936-1941) was a totalitarian regime with nationalistic and militaristic features. The purpose of this study is to collect and process data about the role of competitive sport and physical education in the regime of Metaxas. An additional purpose of this study is to search for common elements in the ideology and policies concerning Physical Education and sport, adopted by the National Socialism in Germany (1933-1945). The analysis of the sources revealed that, in the field of sport, they seem to have implemented similar policies. The main points of the sport's role in these two regimes were the following: (a) intense military character of Physical Education, (b) priority in Physical Education rather than in other educational subjects, (c) foundation of the regime's youth activities and educational programs organized in a nationwide scale, the core of which was Physical Education and sport (i.e. National Youth Organization, Hitler Youth), (d) the strong military character shaped by sport so as to promote or establish forms of exercise associated with war, preparations for war, military and fighting spirit, (e) effort of imposition of total state - control in athletic life, (f) effort to encourage girls further and more intense involvement in athletic activities.*

Keywords: Greece; sports; physical education; totalitarian regime; Metaxas

El paper dels esports en el règim totalitari de Metaxas a Grècia (1936-1941) en comparació amb el Nacionalsocialisme a Alemanya

Resum. *El règim del general Metaxas (1936-1941) va ser un règim totalitari amb característiques nacionalistes i militaristes. L'objectiu del present estudi és el de recollir i processar dades sobre el paper de l'esport de competició i l'educació física durant el règim de Metaxas. Un objectiu addicional és el de buscar elements comuns en la ideologia i les polítiques relatives a l'educació física i l'esport que va desenvolupar el Nacionalsocialisme a Alemanya (1933-1945). L'anàlisi de les fonts revela que, en el camp de l'esport, sembla que van implantar polítiques similars. Els punts principals del paper de l'esport en aquests dos règims són els següents: a) caràcter altament militar de l'educació física; b) prioritat en l'educació física per damunt d'altres temes educatius; c) fundació de les activitats i programes educatius juvenils del règim organitzats a escala nacional, el centre dels quals era l'educació física i l'esport (com ara l'Organització de la Joventut Nacional, les Joventuts Hitlerianes); d) el caràcter fortament militar de l'esport per tal de promoure o establir formes d'exercici associades a la guerra, preparació per a la guerra, esperit militar i de lluita; e) esforç en la imposició d'un control total per part de l'estat sobre la vida esportiva; f) esforç per encoratjar les noies a tenir més implicació i amb més intensitat en activitats esportives.*

Paraules clau: Grècia; esports; educació física; règim totalitari; Metaxas

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Introduction

The interwar period (1918 to 1939), has repeatedly been an object of concern in the field of sport history. (Mangan, 1999a; Mangan, 1999b; Mangan, 1999c; Mangan, 1999d; Aja, 1999; Bolz, 2004; Gori, 1999; Guttman, 1999; Hoberman, 1999; Krüger, 1999; Krüger, 1991; Kustrin & Mangan, 2003; Magdalinski, 1995; Vescovi, 2003). During this historical period, in various –mainly European – countries, several totalitarian political movements dominated public life. The common idea of the above-mentioned researchers is that the totalitarian interwar regimes promoted a common complex of values and priorities regarding the body, physical strength and the use of sport as a tool for improving public health, strengthening the people's fighting spirit and creating a new superior generation. In Greece, at the end of interwar period, after a period of political instability characterized by the alternation of many short-lived governments, the governing of the country (with the support of the king) was handed over to General Ioannis Metaxas, a former military man and leader, at that time, of a small parliamentary party. Metaxas, invoking the communist danger, imposed a dictatorship (with the support of the king); he then became the founder of the so-called «Regime of the 4th of August» (the date of the regime's imposition was the 4th of August, 1936). As a governing system, it wasn't purely fascistic, but it used fascistic methods and ideas (Mahaira, 1987). Metaxas himself defined his regime as totalitarian. This authoritarian system dismantled the parliament and abolished the political parties, as well as the constitution. Metaxas' regime was not a typical military dictatorship, because the dictator did not gain full control of the army during the period of his governance (the king was the typical leader of the army). The regime was also not a typical fascist movement, in that Metaxas lacked the support of a mass fascist-type party. Furthermore, he remained loyal to his old monarchist ideas (Mavrogordatos, 2002; Koliopoulos, 1996; Kokkinos, 1989).

The purpose of this study is to collect and process data about the role of competitive sport and physical education (P.E.) in the regime of Metaxas. An additional purpose of this study is to search for common elements in the ideology and policies concerning P.E. and sports adopted by the regime of the National Socialist (N/S) Germany.

Primary sources regarding Germany include regime publications such Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and the volume *Sport und Staat*, edited by the theorist of physical education in N/S Germany Alfred Baeumler. Furthermore, the book by Heinrich Meusel entitled *Körperliche Grundausbildung*, the book by Bruno Malitz, *Die Leibesübungen in der Nationalsozialistischen Idee* and the edition *Geschichte der Leibesübungen* by Bruno Saubier and E. Stahr were also used as primary sources. Additional sources for the N/S case include published memoirs by several Greek athletic delegates who travelled to Germany to attend the 1936 Olym-

pics and sent reports and descriptions of the N/S Germany sport system were used as, as well as the work of Tsirimpas, who was a chief educational executive of Metaxas's regime and an enthusiastic admirer of the sport-centered N/S educational system. Primary sources regarding the Regime of the 4th August in Greece include the official magazine of the National Youth Organization (E.O.N.), *Neolaia*, various handbooks, booklets and ideological material of the regime and more specifically the following: *Organization of Internal duties –E.O.N.* [*Organismos Esoterikes Yperesias-E.O.N.*], *Two Years of athletic history* [*Athletiki istoria dio eton*], *Education in its right way* [*E Ekapaideusis eis ton orthon tes dromon*] as well as published texts and public speeches by Metaxas and his colleagues. Archival material was mainly found in the (Greek) General State Archives and in the Archives of the Greek Parliament.

National Youth Organization (E.O.N.) and Hitlerjugend

The E.O.N. was founded by Ioannis Metaxas in 1936 and was disbanded in April 1941, three months after his death, and following the collapse of the Greek front after the German invasion. Through this organization Ioannis Metaxas aimed to shape young people into patriots and supporters of the regime. This was his personal vision. Among the basic elements of «youth propaganda issues», were the military way of life and the trilogy of health, body and exercise (Aggelis, 2006). The members of E.O.N. were taught three basic things: a) moral and national education, b) physical education, c) technical education and special training. They wore special uniforms, and the hierarchy of the organization was based on military standards (which were described in detail in *Organization of Internal Duties-E.O.N.* [*Organismos Esoterikes Yperesias E.O.N.*], a special book containing the official regulations of the organization). Education took place mainly in schools or E.O.N. clubs (the shelter of Phalangists) and during the summer months in E.O.N.'s camps or in other organized military camps, such as the one founded in 1938 near Athens (in Zoumberi) for the training of E.O.N. members (Metaxas, 1997).

In National Socialist Germany starting in 1926, the relevant organization was Hitler's Youth («Hitler jugend») which evolved into an attraction for young Germans. The organization New Nation («Jungvolk») was for younger children aged 10-14 years old. Hitler's Youth combined sports and outdoor activities with ideology and gradually became a pole of attraction for German youth, while all other youth organizations either dissolved or were incorporated into Hitler's Youth (Meusel, 1938; Saubier & Stahr, 1939; Malitz, 1933). It enjoyed internal autonomy and gained a military character with the typical military establishment and intensification of fitness and military training after 1935 (Malitz, 1933; Kotoulas, 2005). Their public displays of these values encouraged young men

and women to abandon their individuality in favor of the goals of the Aryan collective (Malitz, 1933; Kotoulas, 2005). The book by Meusel contained analytical exercise curriculums for track and field events, gymnastics, ball games, boxing, wrestling and swimming. Also outlined there were a significant number of regulations that aimed to evaluate the physical condition of members of Hitler's Youth (Meusel, 1938).

The members of E.O.N. and Hitler's Youth were dressed uniformly, behaved similarly, and often thought in the same way. The uniforms they wore emphasized the military character of their lives. All aspects of their activities were characterized by regular and recurring formal rituals in the display of discipline. Children belonged to specific formations. Their symmetry and discipline in the parades and sporting activities exhibited the essence and success of the ideology they followed (Aggelis, 2006). Discipline, order and obedience; these were the three key words which characterized the training and spirit of the youth organizations of the totalitarian states of the interwar period. These words were often used by Metaxas in his speeches and texts when he was addressing E.O.N.'s members («The Leader and the Youth», 1940).

The priority of P.E. and sport

An examination of archival material reveals that the Regime of the 4th of August gave priority to P.E., compared to other educational subjects. The regime increased the time devoted to P.E. in schools and P.E. was regarded as the principal subject (Aggelis, 2006). It was also obvious that the Metaxas regime sought to substantially upgrade the role and the prestige of physical education teachers. Indicative of this trend is the symbolic renaming of the Physical Education Academy to the «National Academy of Physical Education» (Giannakis, 1998). Physical education teachers had a broader role within the E.O.N., since the main purpose of the latter would be the sporting involvement of its members. They were chosen along with military instructors for E.O.N. The introduction of the course «Organization and Management of E.O.N.» in the curriculum of the National Academy of Physical Education was imposed by the Government in order for physical education teachers to respond to their new role. The upgraded National Academy of Physical Education was a public institution where not only physical education teachers, but also army officers, were trained («Under the bright and inspirational leadership of I. Metaxas, the new generation is being reformed», 1940). Another detail indicative of the regime's priorities is that in just one year (from 4-8-1938 to 4-8-1939) the state hired more new P.E. teachers to teach in E.O.N.'s departments than in state schools: 40 vs. 32 («Education in its right way», 1939). During the next year (from 4-8-1939 to 4-8-1940) the number of P.E. teachers who were employed by the state to serve E.O.N. and state schools respectively, was almost equal («Physical Education of the Greek Children», 1940).

Similar practices that increased the time devoted to exercise to 15 % of total school time were introduced in Germany (Aggelis, 2006). Those practices were in line with Hitler's fundamental ideas regarding P.E. and sport, as presented *Mein Kampf* (1939):

The People's State ought to allow much more time for physical training in the school. (...) Today, even in the curriculum of the middle schools, only two short hours in the week are reserved for physical education; and worse still, it is left to the pupils to decide whether or not they want to take part. This shows a grave disproportion between this branch of education and purely intellectual instruction. Not a single day should be allowed to pass in which the young pupil does not have one hour of physical training in the morning and one in the evening; and every kind of sport and physical education should be included (Hitler, 1939, p.319).

Quite similarly in Greece, at the same time, the declared aim of E.O.N.'s educational program was the shaping of both the body and the character. Various phrases by Metaxas which were used for the decoration of *Neolaia's* cover pages are rather indicative of his athletic ideas: «When you make your body robust, don't forget that your soul will also become robust» (Metaxas, 1938, p. 185).

The emphasis on P.E. and sports was not irrelevant to a general tendency to deprecate what had been the usual education, up to then. Metaxas saw P.E. as more useful than mental, cultural or academic education in shaping character and teaching practical skills. Sport was placed in the epicenter of the policy which the Regime of August 4th aspired to materialize via E.O.N.'s activities: «It is true that Physical Education is, in every aspect, the most important growth factor for young people» («Youth and Sports», 1938, p. 279).

Hitler openly dismissed intellectuality, believing that it had no value and also could be become destructive if not combined with a healthy and vigorous body, as well as a correspondingly decisive character:

(...) the State which is grounded on the racial idea must start with the principle that a person whose formal education in the sciences is relatively small but who is physically sound and robust, of a steadfast and honest character, ready and able to make decisions and endowed with strength of will, is a more useful member of the national community than a weakling who is scholarly and refined (Hitler 1939, p. 317).

Reflecting a rather similar spirit to Hitler's, Metaxas, on every occasion, when he was addressing the young Phalangists of E.O.N., made statements such as:

You young athletes, who in your sweat will irrigate this stadium and will be forced into a noble emulation in order to create robust bodies, never forget (...) that discipline which had been taught and practiced by our common ancestors, the discipline of the Spartans, is the one that makes nations strong. When you make your body strong here, do not forget that your

soul will be robust as well («*The Leader and the Youth*», 1940, p. 77).

The regime of Metaxas wished for the creation of an athletic movement, in order to strengthen the country's and the regime's prestige, during major international athletic competitions. In 1938, a plan was made for the organization of the E.O.N.'s great, Pan-Hellenic, athletic games, which were held in 1939 in the Panathenaikon stadium. Apart from the usual popular events (track, cross-country running, cycling, shooting, football, basketball, etc.), we are also informed about rare and strange sports, such as roller-skating or «E.O.N.'s national combined running», which included teams of 16 runners that ran 11,500 meters each, one after the other. In the same year the regime's official publications department edited a book outlining all of the achievements of the Regime of the 4th of August. Entitled «*Athletike Istoría dyo eton*» («*Two years of Athletic History*»), the book detailed all the achievements and innovations of the regime in the field of sport and compared sport under the regime with sport in the pre-regime period. The book claimed that until the imposition of the regime, the situation in Greek sport was nothing more than a «desert» («*Two Years of Athletic History*», 1938). But after the 4th of August, in only two years, there was an impressive athletic reform! Many details, such as the construction of many new stadiums, gyms, pools, shooting centers and camps, as well as the organization of many new sport competitions and athletic events and also the upgrade of funding by the state to athletic clubs of every kind, were presented as strong evidence of the proclaimed athletic revolution («*Two Years of Athletic History*», 1938).

Two of the slogans of the dictator found most frequently in propaganda booklets of the regime (as reflections of his priorities regarding sports) were: «The bases for the reform of the New Greek Generation: I want one Youth: Healthy, Strong and Athletic» («*The Leader and the Youth*», 1940, p. 59). He also stated: «Greek traditional sport will become one of the bases of the Greek reconstruction» («*The Leader and the Youth*», 1940, p. 77).

It's quite likely that the elite-sport system was not considered an important area for the Metaxas regime, compared with the practice of sport as a tool for the implementation of mass educational policy. The main idea was that the aim of sport shouldn't only be the achievement of high records, but mainly the reinforcement of the fighting spirit of perseverance. This was exactly the idea which was expressed by the main P.E. theorist of the German National Socialism, Alfred Baemle. He criticized athletic specialization, racing expertise and the selfish (as he characterized it) pursuit of individual excellence. The purpose of the National Socialistic program in Germany was to shape and create «supermen» and not «superathletes» (Baemle, 1934; Hoberman, 1999).

In the case of the Regime of the 4th of August, Metaxas himself, on many occasions and every time

he was addressing young athletes, expressed similar thoughts:

Now you, young athletes, men and women, who came here with purpose not in pursuing international records, nor victory in world competitions, but with internal purposes to create a new Greek youth, based and built on healthy bodies which form the basis for strong souls, to serve not just any purpose or ideal, but rather certain goals and ideals which represent the current national state. Now you draw on the ancient ideal («*Two Years of Athletic History*», 1938, pp.3-4).

P.E. was considered an excellent means for the formation of character due to its positive influence on the development of virtues such as discipline, respect, honesty and nobility («*Physical Education as a means of shaping the members of E.O.N.*, 1938). Exercise, apart from being a physical means of improving and strengthening people's overall health, was in both regimes a culture medium, promoting moral characteristics and social aspirations. Hitler found particular merit in P.E. and sport as positive factors in shaping the character of young people and as a means of excelling by acquiring mental virtues, such as self-confidence, perseverance, toughness, resistance to pain, and fighting spirit:

The State that is grounded on the racial principle and is alive to the significance of this truth will first of all have to base its educational work not on the mere imparting of knowledge but rather on physical training and the development of healthy bodies. The cultivation of the intellectual facilities comes only in second place. And here again it is character which has to be developed first of all, strength of will and decision. And the educational system ought to foster the spirit of readiness to accept responsibilities gladly (...) Generally speaking, the function of sport is not only to make the individual strong, alert and daring, but also to harden the body and train it to endure an adverse environment (Hitler, 1939, pp. 317-319).

Military character of sport

Another common feature of these interwar regimes was also the link between sport and military training. Athletics and military exercises constituted a single educational complex whose main aim was to consolidate discipline (Vescovi, 2003).

In the context of the educational program of E.O.N., and other organizations of the interwar period, sport acquired a primarily military orientation, understood as part of military preparation (E.O.N., 1939). That is why those regimes promoted a) sport of a military character (wrestling, boxing, fencing, shooting, etc.), b) events that were considered appropriate for inurement of the young and that brought them closer to nature, such as track and field, swimming, and hiking, and c) exercises for military training (marches, parades, armor races, etc.) («*About the curriculum of education and activities*», 1939). Massive athletic demonstrations of either E.O.N.'s divisions or school students indi-

cated the regime's attempt to present the athletic activation of the youth as the base of the regime's social power («Education in its right way», 1939). For example, demonstrations held in Athens on the 28th of May and the 4th of July, 1939, drew as many as 300,000 Athenian spectators (according to the regime).

The E.O.N.'s members specialized in certain fields. Most of those specializations had a direct relationship with sports and especially sports of a military character (horse riding, cycling, shooting, gun-fighting, track and field, naval sports, fighting, boxing, motor biking, orienteering, camping). The regime also put special emphasis on water sports because they were regarded as more compatible with the traditional Greek naval character. Swimming became an obligatory subject for schools located near water. It is also noteworthy that gun-shooting became part of the regular sport activities in the public school curriculum. The regime provided schools with guns and cartridges («Physical Education», 1938). In 1939, the regime gave as much as 1,000,000 drachmas to schools, E.O.N. departments and shooting clubs for the purchase of cartridges. That was a huge amount of money by that time's standards if we take into consideration that during the same year the biggest Greek athletic federation (Hellenic Federation of Athletics – S.E.G.A.S.) received as its annual subsidy no more than 300.000 drachmas («Education in its right way», 1939).

In many volumes of the magazine *Neolaia* there were articles reporting the victories of Greek athletes who took part in international competitions, mainly in fighting sports. The exploits of Christoforidis in boxing and Londos in wrestling were particularly emphasized («Athletics», 1938). Similarly, Hitler (1939) praised boxing while criticizing fencing, which was popular with the nobility of his time:

There is one kind of sport which should be specially encouraged, although many people who call themselves völkisch consider it brutal and vulgar, and that is boxing. (...) It is incredible how many false notions prevail among the «cultivated» classes. The fact that the young man learns how to fence and then spends his time in duels is considered quite natural and respectable. But boxing - that is brutal. Why? There is no other sport which equals this in developing the militant spirit, none that demands such a power of rapid decision or which gives the body the flexibility of good steel. It is no more vulgar when two young people settle their differences with their fists than with sharp-pointed pieces of steel. One who is attacked and defends himself with his fists surely does not act less manly than one who runs off and yells for the assistance of a policeman. But, above all, a healthy youth has to learn to endure hard knocks. This principle may appear savage to our contemporary champions who fight only with the weapons of the intellect. But it is not the purpose of the People's State to educate a colony of aesthetic pacifists and physical degenerates (Hitler, 1939, pp. 318-319).

Notable similarities between the systems were exhibited in the regular organization of military-style

excursions and camps for young people close to nature, whose program of activities stressed P.E. (Meusel, 1938). Consequently, the structure, character and spirit of both E.O.N. and Hitler's youth were entirely military, in accord with the general nature of militaristic regimes (Aggelis, 2006).

Total state control of the country's education and athletic life

The regime's general policy was to put all athletic activities of the country under tight state control. Among the measures that had been taken by the regime in order to accomplish total control of the country's sport activities was probably the founding of the so called «Committee for the Coordination of National Sports», with Metaxas as its chairman. Already in 1938 Metaxas declared himself «Leader of Greek sports». The regime's propaganda underlined this innovation as a sign of the emphasis that the regime was willing to place on sport («Education in its right way», 1939). It was the first time in Greek history that the prime minister became the general coordinator of athletic life.

Metaxas tried to impose totalitarian control over the sporting life of youth, empowering E.O.N. with the task of controlling any sporting activity, despite the reactions of separate athletic federations. In 1939, Metaxas addressed the representatives of athletic federations. He reassured them that E.O.N. was not a sport club (Metaxas, 1997) and that the sports federations would keep their usual role. In May of the same year, the «First Pan-Hellenic Athletic Games of E.O.N.» took place in Athens, in which more than 2000 members of every department of the organization, inside and outside Greece, participated! («Education in its right way», 1939). According to data published in *Neolaia*, in 1938 the number of E.O.N.'s members grew from 19,000 to 500,000 and the sport events organized increased from two to 938. Moreover, 42 new sport centers, 10 camps and 79 training centers were set up for the training of E.O.N.'s members. According to Metaxas himself, in just two years (from the 7th of November, 1937, to the 7th of November, 1939) E.O.N.'s membership increased to more than 750,000 («The Leader and the Youth», 1940). Although the regime would declare that E.O.N. was not a sport club, the great number of sport activities directed by E.O.N. suggests the opposite:

E.O.N. is not a sport club. Athletics, however, is one of its many areas of activity. The participation of its members in competitions is one of the ways by which it employs and seeks the complete sport, not with a championship spirit, but in order to safeguard the health of its members and to cultivate a competitive mood and the original athletic spirit. Therefore, although it is not a sport club, during 1938, E.O.N. conducted 1390 sport competitions throughout Greece, in which a total number of over 200,000 members of both sexes were involved («The Leader and the Youth», 1940, p. 178).

The same had happened in Germany. The National Socialist regime's general policy was to place all athletic activities of the country under state control. The «Nationalsozialistischer Reichsbund für Leibesübungen» (N.S.R.L.) was the umbrella organization for sports, which was led by the Reichsportführer Hans von Tschammer und Osten (Saurbier & Stahr, 1939). Hitler (1939) demanded responsibility for ensuring that physical strength be assigned to the state and not to other private or independent operators:

Accordingly, in the People's State physical training is not a matter for the individual alone. Nor is it a duty which first devolves on the parents and only secondly or thirdly a public interest; but it is necessary for the preservation of the people, who are represented and protected by the State (...) The People's State will have to consider the physical training of the youth after the school period to be just as much a public duty as their intellectual training (Hitler, 1939, pp. 318-321).

Physical exercise as related to strength, public health and public biological status

One of the most typical characteristics of the nationalistic regimes of the interwar period was the attention paid to the improvement of physical strength and public health.

Metaxas always declared his vision for a healthy, strong and athletic youth. As he said: «Blood wants, from time to time, new forces. In the past this happened due to the barbarian invasions. These happily disappeared. Sport remains the current means of rejuvenation of blood» («The Leader and the Youth», 1940, p. 59).

The biological status of society was the first priority of state policy. P.E. and sport undertook the main role in strengthening people at a physical – biological level. Metaxas also said: «First of all, I want all of you to build tough bodies. It's impossible to create a family when your bodies are sick and weak» (Metaxas 1939, p.557).

Physical health, beauty and strength were considered the base of the desirable national and social «reconstruction»: «The health and strength of Greek citizens is the basis of the progress, the joy, the happiness and the general recreation of Greece» (Metaxas, 1938, p.232).

Similar ideas were expressed by the Nazis in Germany. National Socialism was a political movement based on the «culture of power» coming from ancient Greece (Mangan, 1999). According to Baeumler, the creative force – which acquires an almost metaphysical status – is associated with a sense that is both intellectual and biological. It should be noted at this point that the «philosophy of force» as a theoretical framework for sport was not a personal ideology of Baeumler irrelevant to National Socialist ideology. Hitler himself makes specific reference to this term: «In the third Reich, not only knowledge but force as well should exist-and, in fact, the ultimate ideal is the man of the

future whose radiant spirit inhabits a perfect body; through this ideal people will manage to rediscover the route to more ideals and substantial riches above money and property» (Baeumler, 1934, p.4).

German National Socialism tried to connect physical exercise with the value of forming a vigorous body. The production of a naked, vigorous, athletic body practiced in aesthetic standards was the most important factor for racial enhancement. National Socialism also promoted the association of physical activity with physical health and the biological status of the race (Krüger, 1991). The race must be kept clean and strong (Malitz, 1933). This quest was the first and foremost task of the Nazi «philosophy of power» (Magdalinski, 1995).

Although the parameter of racialism was not so emphatically presented in the ideological context of the Regime of the 4th of August (at least not as emphatically as in German National Socialism), we can still find some influences of the idea of racial superiority. For example, among the theoretical subjects taught inside E.O.N. was that of racial education. (Tsiminakis, 1939). They wanted to make E.O.N.'s members familiar with the idea of eugenics. In the direction of eugenics, the regime organized an exhibition with the theme of Public Hygiene in Athens during 1938. There, in order to promote the necessity of physical exercise as an antidote to a non-eugenic heritage, they juxtaposed strong, healthy men against pictures of psychologically and physically sick people (Charitakis, 1939).

In Germany, a very important goal of the regime was the promotion of the fit body as a dominant aesthetic standard and central symbol of a new culture, inspired by «glorious, heroic antiquity» (Mangan, 1999c). This parameter was of tremendous importance to the National Socialistic regime in Germany. In Germany, there were strong trends that promoted the aesthetically-toned body in public space, mainly under the regime's policy of controlling and promoting art, for example, in the case of monumental sculptures (heroic realism) or documentaries that Riefenstahl screened on the occasion of the Olympic Games of Berlin in 1936 (e.g. the famous film «The triumph of the Will») (McFee & Tomlinson, 1999). So, in the case of German National Socialism, the emphasis on sport surpassed the directly-proclaimed purpose, which was to improve public health by developing physical strength and consolidating discipline in the youth. In National Socialistic Germany the emphasis on sport was additionally connected to the «philosophy of force» or «culture of power», which is obvious through the worship of naked, athletic bodies.

Linking P.E. to the aesthetic value of forming a vigorous body appears much more pronounced in Germany, where an aesthetic, nude, vigorous, athletic body – analogous to the classical Greek tradition – reached its apotheosis. This trend built on the nudist movement, which was already very popular in Germany.

In the case of Greece, for Ioannis Metaxas, physical education and sport constituted a priority in state policy in a manner quite similar (though not entirely) to the case of Germany between the two world wars. Sport aesthetics in Greece were of a somewhat more conservative style. For example, a naked athletically-toned body was not promoted in any form of art as nudity aesthetics. The reason was probably that, in contrast to Germany where similar trends were detached from Christianity, Metaxas was influenced by Christianity in a much stronger sense as part of the official regime propaganda. The ideology was summarized in the «Third Greek civilization», which appeared, somehow, as «Greek Christian», and contributed to the crystallization of a somewhat more conservative style in the sports aesthetics of the Metaxas regime. Perhaps because of Christian influence, it manifested a somewhat more conservative style in addressing nudity in sport (Metaxas, 1997; Aggelis, 2006; Ploumidis, 2010).

Attempts to encourage girls' involvement in athletic activities

A common feature of the interwar period was also the effort to strengthen the relationship of girls with sport, despite the prevailing patriarchal construction of traditional society and what was supposed to be the natural role of women, first and foremost, as mothers (Czech, 1997).

For the Regime of the 4th of August the «man-soldier» and the «woman-mother» remained the fundamental ideals. In spite of this fact, sports were considered very important not only for men but also for women, because it was believed that only physical health could render women capable of giving birth to healthy children and make them morally efficient in raising real future soldiers. Thus, the Regime of the 4th of August made significant efforts to help E.O.N.'s female members to become fully involved in a new way of life dominated by discipline, toughness and sports. The traditional mother's role was still not only respected, but furthermore, elevated as sacred. It was probably the first time that young women were massively involved (under the supervision of the state) in sport activities. Most copies of the weekly propaganda publications are illustrated with photographs depicting young females practicing different sports.

Their mission was not to be brave and disciplined soldiers on the battlefield, but militant mothers, appropriate for giving birth to future soldiers, strong in spirit and body, ready to sacrifice their lives for their country. Physical education was valuable as preliminary military training. The shows and events displayed the character of festivals and parades, through which the regime could show the military power required by the nation. Paramilitary training and activities were identical for both genders inside the E.O.N. The list of lessons inside the official curriculum used by the E.O.N.'s members and executives and the variety of

specializations they learned (e.g. gun-shooting and gun-fighting for both genders) clearly demonstrate this fact («About the curriculum of education and activities, 1939). It's rather indicative that in 1939, according to official data of the regime, as many as 17 military camps and 30 summer camps took place. There, as many as 43,000 members of the E.O.N. – boys and girls – were hosted and trained (Aggelis, 2006).

In National Socialist Germany there was also a trend toward increasing girls' involvement in physical exercise and sport. The League of German Girls («Bund Deutscher Maedel») put emphasis on collective athletics, such as rhythmic gymnastics, which German health authorities deemed less strenuous to the female body and better geared to preparing them for motherhood (Meusel, 1938; Kotoulas, 2005). The pursuit of the wider participation of women in sports is also obvious. Hitler points out the need for girls' training to be directed by the same principles, i.e. the priority given to physical improvement, in order to prepare them for the natural role that primarily identifies women, the role of motherhood:

The People's State will have to direct the education of girls just as that of boys and according to the same fundamental principles. Here again special importance must be given to physical training, and only after that must the importance of spiritual and mental training be taken into account. In the education of the girl the final goal always to be kept in mind is that she is one day to be a mother (Hitler, 1939, p. 322).

Epilogue

The regime of Metaxas and that of National Socialist Germany had many clear differences, such as in their approaches to foreign policy. However, this analysis reveals that these nationalist regimes of the interwar period had a deep ideological affinity and convergence regarding the views of organizing and training young people, especially the use of sport not only as a social good, but also as a means of political manipulation.

In the field of sport, it seems that they implemented similar policies. These totalitarian regimes used sport as a means of recruiting and galvanizing the masses. Through sports they wanted to create a young man who would be dynamic, strong and loyal to his leader.

Most important in the pursuit of sport in both regimes was the growing militant, fighting spirit and a stance of absolute discipline in hierarchy. It seems that the policy of the Metaxas regime to organize the youth and the use of sport as a basic means of educating youth, used some elements and ideas from Germany. It seems that the Greek dictatorship was interested in knowing how National Socialism organized the youth population and women's groups, with a view to emulating these practices (Kavadias, 1936).

One more common feature of the two interwar regimes was a trend of upgrading physical education as a school subject, which was considered primary in formal education and the placement of sport at the

heart of public policy under the direct and exclusive supervision of the state, i.e. the regime.

Another common feature was the link between sport and military training, which together constituted a nexus of indoctrination. Similarly, both regimes shared an effort to increase the involvement of girls in sport, despite the prevailing perception of the natural role of women, first and foremost, as mothers. Also, both regimes established youth activities and educational programs on a nationwide scale, the core of which was physical education and sport (i.e. National Youth Organization, Hitler's Youth). All in all, it seems that the most important common characteristic was the strong military character shaped by sport, so as to promote forms of exercise associated with war, military life and the fighting spirit.

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El papel de los deportes en el régimen totalitario de Metaxas en Grecia (1936-1941) en comparación con el Nacionalsocialismo en Alemania

Resumen. El régimen del general Metaxas (1936-1941) fue un régimen totalitario con rasgos nacionalistas y militaristas. El presente estudio tiene el objetivo de recoger y procesar datos sobre el papel del deporte de competición y la educación física durante el régimen de Metaxas. Un objetivo adicional sería el de buscar elementos comunes en la ideología y políticas relativas a la educación física y el deporte adoptadas por el Nacionalsocialismo en Alemania (1933-1945). El análisis de las fuentes nos revela que, en la esfera del deporte, parece que implementaron políticas similares. Los principales puntos del papel del deporte en estos dos regímenes son los siguientes: a) carácter altamente militar de la educación física; b) prioridad de la educación física sobre otros temas educativos; c) fundación de las actividades y programas educativos juveniles del régimen organizados a nivel nacional, cuyo centro era la educación física y el deporte (véase la Organización de la Juventud Nacional, las Juventudes Hitlerianas); d) el carácter fuertemente militar del deporte para promover o establecer formas de ejercicio asociadas con la guerra, preparación para la guerra, espíritu militar y de lucha; e) esfuerzo en la imposición de un control total por parte del estado sobre la vida deportiva; f) esfuerzo para animar a las chicas a tener más implicación y con más intensidad en actividades deportivas.

Palabras clave: Grecia; deportes; educación física; régimen totalitario; Metaxas