

BRAZIL'S PARTICIPATION IN THE 1936 OLYMPIC GAMES IN BERLIN: INTERNAL CONFLICTS AMONG GROUPS

A PARTICIPAÇÃO DO BRASIL NOS JOGOS OLÍMPICOS DE 1936, EM BERLIM: CONFLITOS INTERNOS ENTRE GRUPOS 

LA PARTICIPACIÓN DE BRASIL EN LOS JUEGOS OLÍMPICOS DE BERLÍN DE 1936: CONFLICTOS INTERNOS ENTRE GRUPOS 

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 **Janice Zarpellon Mazo*** <janice.mazo@ufrgs.br>

 **Alice Beatriz Assmann**** <alice.assmann@gmail.com>

 **Ester Liberato Pereira***** <ester.pereira@unimontes.br>

 **Carolina Fernandes da Silva****** <carolina.f.s@ufsc.br>

*Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil.

**Minas Gerais State University (UEMG). Divinópolis, MG, Brazil.

***State University of Montes Claros (Unimontes). Montes Claros, MG, Brasil.

****Federal University of Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, SC, Brazil.

Abstract: The research investigates Brazil's participation in the 1936 Olympic Games, in particular the case of Brazilian rower Fritz Richter, who did not take part in rowing competitions in Berlin, even though he was part of the delegation organized by the Brazilian Confederation of Sports (CBD). The information about Brazil's participation came from newspaper and magazine reports. The interpretation of the sources revealed that the decision about participating in the Olympics was marked by conflicts that ended up with two delegations representing the country in the event. This culminated in the selection of Brazilian athletes in German territory. In that context, there were other conflicts, not only during the Brazilian delegations' stay in Berlin but also when they returned to Brazil. Such events indicate that Brazilian Olympic sports in the 1930s were experiencing incipient times.

Keywords: Water Sports. Rowing. History.

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1 INTRODUCTION¹

The Brazilian participation in the 1936 Summer Olympic Games was marked by conflicts and divergences aroused by the sending of two different delegations to Berlin. In this context, Fritz Richter, a Brazilian rower, played an emblematic figure. This athlete integrated the delegation of the *Confederação Brasileira de Desportos* (CBD) – or it translates as Brazilian Sports Confederation – boarded to Berlin in 1936; however, he was not allowed to participate in the Olympic Games (OG). This situation, its development and outcomes can help us understand and reconstruct the Brazilian rowing participation and delegation as a whole during the 1936 OG.

The conflicts and unusual circumstances that permeate Brazilian participation seem to be a characteristic of this Game as a whole, wherein most of the countries faced some kind of opposition before sending their delegations, which leads this edition to be considered the most controversial of the modern OG, as well as the most studied one (TORRES, 2017).

The entity responsible for the organization of the Brazilian Olympic delegation and also the managing of the sports field until mid-1930 was the Brazilian Sports Confederation (CBD). Even though the first South American organization to integrate the International Olympic Committee (IOC) was Brazilian, which, according to the Brazilian Olympic Committee (COB), established the institution in 1914, it was only after the third Brazilian participation in the OG (1932) that the COB lastly participated in the Olympic sports management within the country (COMITÊ OLÍMPICO BRASILEIRO, 2004).

However, considering Silva (2015), the foundation of the COB occurred in 1935. The coexistence of these two institutions in the country led to both participating in the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, since both CBD and COB sent athletes to this event. Therefore, there were conflicts between these two political groups, comprehending one more episodes between sports and politics, reinforcing that “political issues were a mark of the Olympic Movement since its genesis”² (GIGLIO, 2017, p. 2).

Although the idea that sport and politics have been correlated since their emergence has been strongly acceptable since the last century, Holmes (1974) reminds us that this was not always the case. He referred to the first modern OG in 1896, where, despite the political conflicts in Europe, the essence of sport was not sublimed by them. This was stated by the founder of the modern games – Pierre de Coubertin – since the beginning, when he said that the principles of Olympism should remain independent from the political episodes (MÜLLER, TODT, 2015).

The study of the OG’s history demonstrates, though, that politics seems to have increasingly overlapped the essence of sport over the years, showing a clear path of such relationship. When it comes to the Berlin Games in 1936, it is evident the political use that Hitler embraced through his Minister of Public Enlightenment and

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² “[...] questões políticas foram uma marca do Movimento Olímpico desde sua gênese” (tradução nossa).

Propaganda, Josef Goebbels, who saw an opportunity to explore the OG's advertising potential to expand the Nazi regime (TORRES, 2017). This was corroborated by the German Huebner (2015, p. 3), "Berlin 1936 may well be the first instance of such a hard-to-digest mixture concocted of brotherhood in sports on one side and political discrepancies on the other."³

The Nazis were not the first to realize the potential of sports, but just as in advertising, they were one of those who best explored these dimensions in the political universe of the time. In order to demonstrate Aryan superiority, they spared no effort in hosting the 1936 OG, in which forty-nine countries and about four thousand athletes participated. This event was the first to receive footage for television broadcast, with devices installed in theatres across the city to be followed by the population (SALUN, 2012).

And this is because, among other factors, the 1936 OG helped Hitler to achieve his rule in Germany, strengthened his aversion to democracies, and persuaded him of his lack of ambition or inability to safeguard minority rights (MURRAY, 1992). Thus, the 1936 OG, which also became known as the Nazi Olympic Games, completed 80 years in 2016, exactly in the year of OG in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). However, the 1936 edition of the sporting event represents a milestone in the history of the OG of the Modern Era for different reasons, such as, for example, the reinvention of the Olympic Torch Relay Race tradition, a practice carried out in Ancient Greece. In addition, there was the production of the 1936 OG documentary, covered via radio and television stations, and the significant presence of journalists from various countries around the world to publicize the sporting event.

Based on this scenario, this study investigates the participation of Brazil in the 1936 Summer Olympic Games, particularly, the case of the Brazilian rower Fritz Richter, who, besides integrating the delegation organized by the CBD, did not dispute the rowing competition in Berlin. Although there are several studies (TORRES, 2017; HÜBNER, 2014; HÜBNER, 2013; DRAKE, 2011; KESSLER, 2011; WENN, 1996; WIGGINS, 1983) on the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, no research was found that addressed the participation of the Brazilian delegation since its formation, its stay in Germany and its return to Brazil.

In a brief review of the participation of Brazil in the Summer Olympic Games that started in the 1920 edition in Antwerp, Brazilian marksmen, out of the total of 21 members, won the first medals for the country. Then at the 1924 Paris OG, despite the surprising debut in 1920, they did not reach the same conquests, leading to a withdrawal in 1928, with the perspective of being better prepared for the following Olympics in Los Angeles 1932. A total of 67 athletes joined the third national participation, now under the Vargas government, also marked by the first participation of a Brazilian woman in the OG. In the 1936 edition, there was an increase in the participation of Brazilian athletes in various sports. According to COB (COMITÊ OLÍMPICO BRASILEIRO, 2004), a total of 94 Brazilian athletes boarded for Berlin. As a whole, the amount was consistently superior to the first participation in Antwerp, 1920 (SILVA; BORBA; MAZO, 2021; MAZO, SILVA, 2019; SILVA, KATCIPIS, MAZO, 2018; MAZO *et al.*, 2017; RUBIO, 2015; NETO-WACKER, WACKER, 2010).

3 "Berlim 1936 pode muito bem ser o primeiro exemplo de uma mistura tão difícil de digerir inventada de fraternidade nos esportes de um lado e discrepâncias políticas do outro" (tradução nossa).

Among them was Fritz Richter, a rower from Rio Grande do Sul (RS), the southernmost state of Brazil, besides ten other athletes from the state, all of whom composed the CBD delegation. A German descendent, Richter was a member of a Rowing Sports Association in Porto Alegre, capital of RS. The South American champion at the time sparked controversy during his time in Berlin, as well as producing several newspaper headlines with versions contrary to those of the other members of the delegation. His performance was reported in bold and capital letters: "In the tie held in Berlin, the renowned champion Fritz Richter defeated the valiant São Paulo rower Celestino Palma, and was considered by the Olympic technicians as one of the three best scullers in the world."⁴ (OS NADADORES QUE..., 1936, p. 1).

In the 1936 OG, the rowers represented the largest group in both Brazilian delegations sent to Berlin, twenty two athletes in total. This number was probably related to the spreading of this sport in major cities of the country, mainly from the European influence, due to the immigration movement that occurred in that period.

One of our purposes is to reconstruct the historical and socio-cultural scenario of sports in Brazil. In order to achieve that, a research with a historical character was undertaken with the use of printed sources surveyed in the Hemeroteca Digital Brasileira (National Electronic Newspaper Library, 2021) and in the Catálogo do Esporte e da Educação Física na Revista do Globo (Sports and Physical Education catalog at Globo Magazine) (MAZO, 2004), a specialized sports magazine with wide dissemination in southern Brazil. Notes and reports regarding the 1936 Olympic Games found in the pages of newspapers from Rio Grande do Sul (Fritz Richter's home state) and Rio de Janeiro (capital of Brazil in the period) were analyzed. In addition, a literature review on the subject was conducted in books, scientific papers, and other materials. The site of the Confederação Brasileira de Remo (Brazilian Rowing Confederation - CBR) was also consulted. After this stage, the information was subjected to a document analysis technique. The sources were analyzed in relation to the time; in relation to the facts or historical process being specifically examined; and in relation to the problem dealt with by the historian. Thus, these sources were asked to contextualize the collected document, mainly to understand the text in the context of its time.

2 ROWING SPORTS ASSOCIATIONS IN PORTO ALEGRE: THE STARTING POINT FOR AN ATHLETIC CAREER

This institution was an important place to promote sociability and practice sports, giving space and conditions for rowing athletes to develop their abilities. Rowing practice in Brazil dates back to the late nineteenth century when the European immigrants founded the firsts Rowing Sports Associations (SILVA, 2015). With the development of this sport in clubs and the increase of competition events, leagues, and associations were created, becoming responsible for organizing the practice in different Brazilian cities and states. Rio Grande do Sul, along with Rio de Janeiro, is considered the pioneer in the institutionalized practice of Rowing in Brazil (ASSMANN;

⁴ "No empate realizado em Berlim, o renomado campeão Fritz Richter derrotou o valente remador paulista Celestino Palma, e foi considerado pelos técnicos olímpicos um dos três melhores remadores do mundo". (tradução nossa).

SILVA; MAZO, 2014). Until the current days, centenary Rowing Clubs maintain their activities in the state.

Ten athletes from Rio Grande do Sul boarded to Berlin in 1936. According to the information provided by the COB, they participated only in the eighth round with coxswain event and lost in the second round of the playoff. One of them did not take part in competitions, the same rower who has the most controversial history: Fritz Richter. This athlete belonged to the *Clube de Regatas Almirante Tamandaré* (Almirante Tamandaré Yacht Club), created on January 18th, 1903 (SILVA, 2015; SILVA, PEREIRA, MAZO, 2014).

He was born in the city of Santa Cruz do Sul, Rio Grande do Sul, and was the owner of a garage in Porto Alegre. He participated for the first time in a rowing competition on June 16, 1929, reaching the second place in the beginners' category (BIOGRAFIA DESPORTIVA DOS..., 1936). Richter's victories, especially in Skiff, many times commented in newspapers, took him to the OG in Berlin. However, he was not included in any of the official participant reports of the COB nor in the records of the CBD. According to the CBR (CONFEDERAÇÃO BRASILEIRA DE REMO, 2021), he participated just in the XXXIII South American Rowing Championship, in 1934, the XXXIV Brazilian Men's Rowing Championship, in 1935, and the II South American Rowing Championship in the same year.

Medalist in many former competitions, Richter went to Berlin – as the newspapers indicate – but could not take part in the Games. Polemics and controversies involved his participation since the departure from Porto Alegre until his return. Due to this fact, he was the subject of numerous newspaper reports before, throughout, and after the Games. The reports on Fritz Richter's participation reveal different versions about the events relating to the Brazilian performance in this event and the difficulties encountered by the rowers on account of the sending of two different delegations to the 1936 OG.

This episode occurred due to events linked to the organization of the Brazilian sports field. Until mid-1930s, CBD was the coordinator of national sport (NETO-WACKER, WACKER, 2010). As of 1935, the COB was created, an entity representing the IOC and, therefore, responsible for the organization of Olympic sports in the country. The coexistence of these two entities culminated in internal conflicts in the sports field and in the sending of two different Brazilian delegations to the 1936 OG.

3 TWO DIFFERENT BRAZILIAN DELEGATIONS IN BERLIN: A VERSION OF THIS UNUSUAL SITUATION

The conflict between these two institutions began one year earlier, when the Brazilian Olympic Committee was officially established and recognized, besides the divergence between CBD, the prior institution that controlled sports in the country. Since 1916, the CBD “controlled the destiny of national sports in Brazil”⁵ (NETO-WACKER, WACKER, 2010, p. 30), and the recognition of the COB, in 1935, threatened its hegemony. The CBD was supported by the International Sports Federations and, especially, by the Brazilian government. The COB, on the other hand, was supported

⁵ “[...] controlou o destino do esporte nacional no Brasil” (tradução nossa).

by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). This situation affected Brazil's participation in the 1936 Summer Olympic Games, in Berlin.

The divergences about who should represent the country in the 1936 OG were in the Brazilian newspapers' headlines. In June of 1936, The *Correio da Manhã* published an official letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, communicating that, according to the German Olympic Committee (DOSB), the rowers selected by the COB could not participate in the Berlin OG as long as this entity had no international affiliations (NÃO PODERÃO COMPETIR..., 1936). This position was probably related to the close relations established between the Brazilian government, under the command of Getúlio Vargas, and the German government (COMITÊ OLÍMPICO BRASILEIRO, 2004). This pronouncement was positively commented by CBD, since it favored the supremacy of its athletes.

The International Federations of Rowing, Swimming, and Athletics were also supportive to the CBD group and against the participation of COB athletes. The newspaper printed a circular letter of the *Fédération Internationale des Sociétés d'Aviron* (F.I.S.A) – International Federation of Rowing Societies – sent to the CBD leaders, confirming the DOSB position (SOBRE A SITUAÇÃO DOS REMADORES, 1936), banning any pre-Olympic event (A PROPÓSITO DA SELEÇÃO..., 1936).

These actions, however, were not enough to solve the problem, because the COB delegation boarded to Berlin earlier than the CBD group, probably on June 24, 1936 (A PARTIDA DOS ATHLETAS..., 1936; A DELEGAÇÃO DO COB..., 1936). On the same ship was Souza Ribeiro, as special commissioner of the Confederation, responsible for informing the COI about the sport situation in Brazil due to the dissension between the national entities – CBD and COB. Despite the positions of DOSB and FISA, as soon as it arrived in Berlin, the COB delegation was accommodated in the Olympic Village (A CAMINHO DOS JOGOS OLYMPICOS, 1936) and could participate in the pre-Olympic events, even before the departure of the CBD delegation (APEZAR DE CUMPRIR..., 1936).

The rowers from CBD delegation embarked to Berlin only on July 7, 1936, along with the Swimming and Athletics athletes (A DELEGAÇÃO DO COB..., 1936). According to *Correio da Manhã*, the COB President denied the CBD athletes the Olympic Passports, preventing them from traveling on July 2, 1936, as planned, and creating unexpected difficulties for the delegation (NÃO SEGUIRÁ MAIS HOJE..., 1936). In Berlin, the athletes stayed overnight on the train station, until an agreement was taken.

This embarrassing impasse almost cost Brazil participation in Rowing and Swimming (OS GAÚCHOS NÃO PODERÃO..., 1936). According to Licht (2013), President Getúlio Vargas had to intervene in order to resolve this delicate situation five days after the beginning of the Games. Reports published in *A Federação* and *Correio da Manhã* on August 4, 1936, reinforce Licht's findings. According to the newspapers, CBD and COB established an agreement related to their participation in the OG due to a direct intervention of the President (O BRASIL COMPETIRÁ..., 1936; OS PRIMEIROS DIAS..., 1936). The solution was to unify both delegations through internal contests, such as the skiff event, or in accordance with the conquered

victories in other Championships, which was the case of the eight coxswain event (OS GAÚCHOS NÃO PODERÃO..., 1936).

Even thus, CBD had to allocate its delegation on boarding houses in Berlin, since they did not have access to the Olympic Village. The athletes from Rio Grande do Sul, all rowers of the delegation organized by CBD, barely knew the Village. The discontentment with this and other situations in Berlin disappointed some rowers, especially Fritz Richter.

4 THE CASE OF FRITZ RICHTER: DIVERGENCES WITHIN THE CBD DELEGATION

In the consulted sources, controversy versions were also found within the CBD delegation. Especially, the reports focused in divergences between Fritz Richter and the leaders of his delegation, the CBD.

According to a pronouncement of Richter in the *Correio da Manhã* newspaper, his problems began almost immediately after the departure from Brazil to Berlin (RICHTER ENCERROU SUA CARREIRA..., 1936). Fritz Richter, alleging personal problems, almost gave up his participation in the Games. For Captain Darci Vignoli, member of the Brazilian delegation in the 1936 OG and President of the *Liga Náutica Rio-Grandense* (Rio-Grandense Nautical League), Richter had financial problems (AS INVENCIONICES DO CAMPEÃO..., 1936). His testimony evidenced that the problems faced in the mid-twentieth century are not different from the problems faced nowadays by the Brazilian athletes. Financial problems, to this day, restrict the participation of athletes in international and even national competitions. As many athletes, Richter combined his professional career and sports practice; it is important to mention that the amateurism was an Olympic value and a rule in order to participate at the OG in that time.

Despite the situation with the Olympic Passports, he left the country on July 2, 1936 with the boats and other two rowers (NÃO SEGUIRÁ MAIS HOJE..., 1936). According to *Correio da Manhã*, Fritz Richter, the South American champion sculler left earlier to satisfy the interests of the CBD. However, they faced problems disembarking since they were not legalized. About this fact, the same periodical commented that the fight between the two entities (COB and CBD) was causing “annoyance to their subordinates [athletes]”⁶ (O MARISCO, 1936, emphasis added).

In Berlin, at the internal dispute organized to decide which rower would represent Brazil at the skiffs events, Fritz Richter lost the contest against Celestino Palma, member of the COB delegation, from Rio de Janeiro. In the sources, opposite versions of Richter and Palma on this race can be found. For Fritz Richter, this was the beginning of his “odyssey” in Germany (RICHTER ENCERROU SUA CARREIRA..., 1936). Possibly, that is the reason why the rower does not appear in the record of participants in the 1936 OG, since he could not participate in an official contest.

According to Darci Vignoli, member of the Brazilian delegation, there were good and bad moments in Berlin, but this was for every integrant of the CBD, not only

⁶ “[...] aborrecimento com seus subordinados [atletas]” (tradução nossa)

Richter (AS INVENCIONICES DO CAMPEÃO..., 1936). CBD accused the athlete of deserter, alleging that he disappeared after the arrival in Berlin. Richter did not participate of the training, and when he appeared to the leader of his delegation, he had a relative with him. Moreover, according to the CBD, Richter demonstrated disinterest for the Games (ECOS DA REPRESENTAÇÃO BRASILEIRA..., 1936).

The consulted sources indicate that Richter requested money to the Brazilian leaders many times. In an interview to *Correio da Manhã* newspaper, he talked about his daily journey looking for resources to live in Germany. He had to ask his supervisor, Décio do Amaral, for help almost on a daily basis in order to get some money to pay his bills and food (RICHTER ENCERROU SUA CARREIRA..., 1936). The rower also argued that he was abandoned by the CBD leaders, and had the need to look for his relatives in Berlin not to suffer privations. According to Richter the other athletes were in the same situation, but they did not have friends in Germany (ECOS DA REPRESENTAÇÃO BRASILEIRA..., 1936). It is important to remember that, differently from the COB athletes, the CBD delegation was housed outside the Olympic Village.

The sportsmen from Rio Grande do Sul, José Carlos Daudt and Túlio de Rose, arriving back in Brazil, refuted Richter's story and emphasized that nobody went hungry in Berlin. The printing press commented on Richter's expulsion from the delegation, due to his indiscipline and some threats to Décio Amaral asking for money (ECOS DA REPRESENTAÇÃO BRASILEIRA..., 1936). He was also accused of going to Berlin with other interests, such as tourism, visiting of relatives, and professional issues (LIGEIRO CONFRONTO ENTRE..., 1936). The rower Ernesto Sauter, however, contradicted the newspaper, arguing in favor of Richter. According to him, everything that could go wrong in Berlin happened to Richter (AS INVENCIONICES DO CAMPEÃO..., 1936).

The printing press itself shares different opinions about the rower. The newspaper *Correio da Manhã*, from Rio de Janeiro, commented on Richter's abandonment of the aggravated situation in Germany (RICHTER ENCERROU SUA CARREIRA..., 1936). While the newspaper *Jornal do Brasil*, also from Rio de Janeiro, called the rower's declaration "*As invencionices do Campeão Fritz Richter*" ("The inventions of the champion Fritz Richter") (25/9/1936), the return of Richter to Brazil was also disturbed and caused polemics (RICHTER ENCERROU SUA CARREIRA..., 1936).

Despite the facts against Richter, something contributed to his defense, such as a report in the *Correio da Manhã* about the good intentions of the rower during a specific episode in Berlin. Days after the arrival in Berlin, the rower Orlando Felini, from São Paulo, broke his arm in an accident. According to Richter, he saw the accident and helped Orlando, taking him to the hospital and paying the expenses with the only money that he had (RICHTER ENCERROU SUA CARREIRA..., 1936). José Carlos Daudt contradicted this version, saying that CBD paid the hospital's costs and questioned how Fritz could have paid the expenses if he had no money (AS INVENCIONICES DO CAMPEÃO..., 1936).

For the rower, his journey to Berlin was disappointing and caused damage to his professional and personal life. He also complained about the missing of the family, due to the five months far away from home. Richter also pondered about leaving the

sport behind, alleging the insincerity of the CBD leaders (RICHTER ENCERROU SUA CARREIRA..., 1936).

The controversies about Richter's participation, the other rowers, and the Brazilian athletes in the 1936 OG in Berlin reveal the disorganization and fragility of the country sports scene in that period. The contrast between the situation in Brazil and what was found in Germany broadens the debates on this topic (NEGREIROS, 2009). The complicated participation of the Olympic Brazilian delegations left a strong remembrance. Furthermore, the discourse and practice of order were recent in the Brazilian legislation (NEGREIROS, 2009), so much so that, possibly based on the 1936 episodes, the 3rd and 4th articles of Decree-Law n. 3,199 of April 14, 1941 were elaborated. The 3rd article determined as a competency of the *Conselho Nacional de Desportos* (National Sports Council) “[...] to decide on the participation of national sports delegations in international games, hearing the higher entities, and also supervise their organization”⁷ (BRASIL, 1941). And, according to the 4th article, the delegates of the International Olympic Committee should be called to participate in the meetings, when the Council discussed anything in terms of the Olympic Games.

Policies for the sports field in Brazil were lengthy. Only thirty years after the first law that regulated the sport in Brazil, a new law was enacted – N. 6.251, of October 1975 – establishing general rules on sports and giving visibility to the COB. Since then, the Committee has the right to organize and direct the participation of the country in the OGs, promote national and international tournaments, disseminate and propagate the Olympic ideal in Brazil, and other functions, also integrating the National Sports System.

The episode of the Brazilian rowing athletes' participation, divided into the delegations of CBD and COB left traces in the sports memory of Brazil, due to the internal political disputes between the two institutions governing the sport in the country. This situation resulted in different versions of the events relating to Brazil's participation in the 1936 Olympic Games, which signaled the division between athletes from different states. Since the rowers were the majority of them, the facts that occurred with these teams revealed some adversities that happened during this edition of the Games, demonstrating the fragility of the Brazilian sports organization, not only in terms of policies, resources, and structure, but also in relation to the lack of a sport's national identity.

The issues created by the presence of two delegations in the 1936 OG brought problems for the Brazilian athlete's participation. Some rowers could not take part in the competitions due to an internal dispute among Brazilians, established to decide which athletes would be able to represent the country in some events.

Fritz Richter, a German descendant who could represent the ideal man, and “according to Coubertin and to the National Socialists, a completely trained athlete who was ready to take on the struggle of life and overwhelm the weak”⁸ (HECK, 2014), did not stand out for his sporting performance, since he lost the internal race

7 “[...] deliberar sobre a participação de delegações desportivas nacionais em jogos internacionais, ouvidas as instâncias superiores, e ainda fiscalizar a sua organização” (tradução nossa).

8 “[...] de acordo com Coubertin e os Nacional-Socialistas, um atleta completamente treinado que estava pronto para enfrentar a luta da vida e vencer os fracos” (tradução nossa).

and could not compete the official event, but by the number of controversial reports and accusations about him in the newspapers of the time.

One of the main complaints found in Richter's statements is the lack of structural support - transportation, lodging, food, etc. - by the organizing committee and, mainly, financial support to enable athletes to participate in international competitions. By observing the exposure of current Brazilian Olympic athletes, especially after the end of the OG, the criticism about the lack of encouragement and a consistent Olympic policy that enable their livelihoods as Olympic athletes, especially for the less "profitable" modalities are intense, as is the rowing context nowadays. The modality had its apex of athletes exactly in 1936 and, since then, it has been progressively reducing its representation in the games (CONFEDERAÇÃO BRASILEIRA DE REMO, 2021).

Back then, the absence of public policies, combined with the incipient COB, especially in the first decades of the twentieth century, may also have contributed to the precarious performance of the Brazilian Olympic sport. Many athletes were state, national, and continental champions, but did not achieve the same success at the Olympic Games. This situation can also show that the Brazilian athletes' performance was lagging behind other countries.

In a brief comparison with neighboring Argentina, which had its Olympic Committee recognized by the IOC in 1924, the entity had justified the sending of the delegation to Berlin, according to Torres (2017), inspired by the Olympic Movement principles, since they understood that the Games represented a great ideal of universal fraternity and a great setting to show the national sports' virtues, and, by extension, of the nation itself. According to the same author, the Argentine delegation had the character of representing the country as a sports embassy. Despite having started its participation in the Olympic Games in 1924 and having taken a delegation of 55 athletes – 53 unless Brazil – to Berlin, facing financial resources difficulties as well, Argentinians returned with the same seven medals of the three previous editions (TORRES, 2017). From these reports on the Argentine participation in the 1936 Olympic Games, it can be seen that not only its sporting performance was superior to Brazil's, but it also shows signs of having a different Olympic sport conception compared to Brazil in the same period.

According to the analyzed sources, the events surrounding the 1936 OG revealed changes that began to occur in the Brazilian sports scene. In this period, the sports field was strongly marked by representations of political forces organizing entities, as well as the promulgation of incipient regulatory laws. In the second half of the 1930s, a sports regulatory process in Brazil was triggered, which culminated in the promulgation of Decree Law 3,199 of April 14, 1941, considered the first legislation regulating sports in Brazil.

These changes accompany the development of the world sports scenario, when sports begin to gain new representations and political strength, of the growing international visibility and advertising potential for the nations' images through the sports phenomenon, regardless of the intentions involved. When Adolf Hitler came to power in January 1933, there was much concern about the realization of the OG in the new Nazi Germany, but with the speech that politics would be kept out of the OG

sports scene, the IOC decided not to change its plans, despite all the protests of those who opposed the event in Germany. Pierre de Coubertin seemed to be finally realistic about this phenomenon, since in one of his last statement, after the 1936 OG, he pointed out that “every creation, no matter how vibrant it may be, evolves in keeping with the costumes and passions of the moment. Today, politics is making its way into the heart of every issue. How can we expect [...] the Olympism itself to be immune?”⁹ (MÜLLER; TODT, 2015, p. 584).

The participation of Brazilian delegations in the Olympic Games (OG), in the first half of the twentieth century, has specific features characterized by great challenges faced, mainly, by the athletes. Because they were held in countries in Europe and North America, the opportunity to participate in the first editions of the OG already represented an achievement for Brazilian athletes who, in addition, faced difficulties related to the absence or low quality of equipment and sports facilities, poor knowledge of universal rules and training techniques, funding for travel and accommodation, disorganization of the Brazilian entities responsible, among others (SILVA; BORBA; MAZO, 2021; MAZO, SILVA, 2019; MAZO *et al.*, 2017). It should be noted that the first sports legislation in Brazil was enacted only in 1941, through Decree-Law n. 3,199 of 1941.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The history of Brazil's participation in the Olympic Games provides us with information to ponder about the adversities that came from a political dispute for power between entities. In addition, it helps to keep the sport memory of the country alive. The participation of Rio Grande do Sul rowers in 1936 marks one of the booms of the development of this nautical sport in the state and in the country. The occurrences that took part in this event demonstrate the changes that begin to occur in the world and Brazilian sports scene, when sports gain new representations and political strength, with new entities, as well as new regulatory laws. With the growth of the global representation of the OG, as a showcase of the forces of nations and developed countries, its editions grow in competitiveness, as well as their meanings are reconfigured, gaining new contours and perspectives.

The information about the Brazilian participation came from newspaper and magazine reports. The interpretation of the sources revealed that the decision of Brazil's participation in the Olympic Games was marked by conflicts, affecting the sending of two delegations to represent the country in the event. This fact culminated in the selection of Brazilian athletes in German territory. At this juncture, there were other conflicts, not only during the stay of the Brazilian delegations in Berlin, but when they returned to the country. Such events indicate that the Brazilian Olympic sport in the 1930s was at an incipient moment.

It is undeniable the relevance of this research, as well as of others that are generally dedicated to Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo Olympic athletes. After all, these

9 “[...] cada criação, por mais vibrante que seja, evolui de acordo com os costumes e as paixões do momento. Hoje, a política está penetrando no cerne de todas as questões. Como podemos esperar [...] que o próprio Olimpismo seja imune?” (tradução nossa).

states, historically, had many representatives, not only athletes, but also officials and other agents in the Brazilian Olympic delegations. However, the occurrence of Olympic athletes coming from the great Brazilian metropolises at the time needs to be more problematized, and with this purpose, studies on the case of the Olympic athlete Fritz Richter can contribute to a deeper analysis of the theme.

Furthermore, we ponder on the importance of advancing in the research on the paths taken by Brazilian athletes who participated in the Olympic Games, but did not win medals, and even on those who tried to participate, but did not obtain the indices to qualify. It is considered that, investing in this study perspective, the Cultural History of Sports will be able to contribute in a more effective way.

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Resumo: A pesquisa investiga a participação do Brasil nas Olimpíadas de 1936, em particular, o caso do remador brasileiro Fritz Richter, que não disputou competições de remo em Berlim, embora tenha feito parte da delegação organizada pela Confederação Brasileira de Desportos (CBD). As informações sobre a participação brasileira vieram de reportagens de jornais e revistas. A interpretação das fontes revelou que a decisão da participação do Brasil nos Jogos Olímpicos foi marcada por conflitos, afetando o envio de duas delegações para representar o país no evento. Esse fato culminou na seleção de atletas brasileiros em território alemão. Nessa conjuntura, ocorreram outros conflitos, não apenas durante a permanência das delegações brasileiras em Berlim, mas quando retornaram ao país. Tais eventos indicam que o esporte olímpico brasileiro na década de 1930 vivia um momento incipiente.

Palavras chave: Esportes aquáticos. Remo. História.

Resumen: Este trabajo investiga la participación de Brasil en los Juegos Olímpicos de 1936, en particular, el caso del remero brasileño Fritz Richter, quien no disputó pruebas de remo en Berlín, pese a formar parte de la delegación organizada por la Confederación Brasileña de Deportes (CBD). Las informaciones sobre la participación brasileña provienen de reportajes de periódicos y revistas. La interpretación de las fuentes reveló que la decisión sobre la participación de Brasil en los Juegos Olímpicos estuvo marcada por conflictos, llevando al envío de dos delegaciones para representar al país en el evento. Este hecho culminó en la selección de atletas brasileños en territorio alemán. En esa coyuntura, hubo otros conflictos, no solo durante la estadia de las delegaciones brasileñas en Berlín, sino cuando éstas regresaron al país. Tales eventos indican que el deporte olímpico brasileño en la década de 1930 se encontraba en un estado incipiente.

Palabras clave: Deportes acuáticos. Remo. Historia.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have declared that this work involves no conflict of interest.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Janice Zarpellon Mazo: Text writing, interpretation of research materials, theoretical foundation and final review.

Alice Beatriz Assmann: Documentary collection, initial text writing, interpretation of research materials, theoretical foundation.

Ester Liberato Pereira: Text writing, interpretation of research materials, theoretical foundation and final review.

Carolina Fernandes da Silva: Text writing, interpretation of research materials, theoretical foundation and final review.

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Alex Branco Fraga*, Elisandro Schultz Wittizorecki*, Ivone Job*, Mauro Myskiw*, Raquel da Silveira*

*Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, School of Physical Education, Physiotherapy and Dance, Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil.