



SPORT AS A STATE TOOL TO STRENGTHEN THE IMAGE OF FRANCO'S REGIME Politics in Sports During the Early Franco's Regime (1941-1948)

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ABSTRACT

From the moment he became head of state in the midst of the Spanish Civil War, General Franco developed mechanisms to legitimise and construct his image and that of his political regime. Sport was one of his favourite tools for mobilising and uniting a broken and fragmented society, which survived the post-war period and Spain's international isolation in precarious conditions.

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1. Introduction

Fascism is a political ideology that shares a number of common characteristics, regardless of the country in which it developed as a form of government. It is characterised by its totalitarian, anti-democratic, ultra-nationalist and extreme right-wing nature (Rodríguez Jiménez, 1997, p.134). All of these characteristics are present in Francoism, although Franco's particularist vision of the religious question and the weight of militarism in public life made Francoism a regime that Stanley Payne defined as 'semi-fascist', to be transformed later, after 1945, into a bureaucratic and corporatist authoritarian regime with the tutelary figure of Franco (Payne, 2014, pp. 193-195).

On 20 April 1937, during the Spanish Civil War, Franco issued a decree uniting the Traditionalist Spanish Falange (Falange Española Tradicionalista, FET) and the Councils of the National Syndicalist Offensive (Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista, JONS). Thus, was born the National Movement (Movimiento Nacional), the only legal party of the regime, as all other political parties and class unions were banned by Franco in the same decree.

Sport was an important element of propaganda and social cohesion, and Franco soon placed it in the hands of the National Movement with the creation of the National Sports Delegation of the FET and the JONS in 1941. At the head of the new organisation, Franco appointed José Moscardó, a lieutenant general in the army. He was a man of Franco's utmost confidence, whom he had previously appointed President of the Spanish Olympic Committee (Comité Olímpico Español, COE).

Sport was becoming a mass phenomenon and its control could not go unnoticed. Through its organisation, planning and management, a model of nationhood and political leadership in accordance with Franco's ideology could be built. Thus, Franco's regime structured the physical activity and sport of the Spanish people from all spheres: women, youth and trade unions, and it did so with clear slogans of preservation of the national Catholic identity of Franco's Regime.

2. Objectives

The study of two elements as vast as sport and politics, and the symbiosis between the two, is a complex and ambitious task. Sport is one of the most important mass phenomena of the 20th century and its use has not been alien to any political system. It has been used by dictatorships and consolidated democracies alike. Consequently, this article has been written with the following objectives in mind:

- To analyse the mechanisms used by the Franco regime to instrumentalise sport.
- To show the elements that led to the strengthening of the image of Francoism in general and of Franco in particular with the sports policy developed in the early Franco regime.
- To identify how sport was used to promote a moral and social model based on the parameters of national Catholicism.
- To analyse the diplomatic and foreign policy strategies used by the Franco regime to strengthen its image abroad through participation in international sporting competitions.

3. Methodology

The methodology used in the preparation of this article is based on three fundamental aspects: the review of the existing bibliography, the study of the legislation that was implemented during the historical period analysed and, most importantly, the complete study of all the existing archives of the National Sports Delegation of the FET and the JONS, as well as the archives of the Spanish Olympic Committee (COE) of the London Olympic Games (1948).

The study of legislation was carried out by consulting all the official State bulletins published periodically by Francisco Franco's government between 1 January 1938 and 31 December 1938 on the official website of the BOE. At the same time, all consultations of the various official bulletins of the National Sports Delegation were carried out by consulting the digital edition of the same published by the Higher Sports Council. This was accompanied by a study of the existing documentation on sport during the dictatorship, which was analysed at the National Library, the Archive of the Francisco Franco Foundation and the Documentary Centre for Historical Memory, both on their websites and during visits to them.

The qualitative analysis of all the documents focused on the search for key words that might indicate the use of sport to construct a national identity and to strengthen Francoism as a whole. Nation,

homeland, honour and prestige were words associated with the concept of sport promoted by Francoism, which served to unite a country that had been materially and morally destroyed by the Spanish Civil War.

4. Sport in the Consolidation of the Image of Francoism

On 22 February 1941, the Official State Bulletin (Boletín Oficial del Estado,BOE) decreed the creation of the Sports Delegation of the Traditionalist Spanish Falange (FET) and the Councils of the National Syndicalist Offensive (JONS). As stated in the decree itself, "the policy of the Falangist State, which is directed towards the unity and strengthening of all activities leading to the strongest power of the fatherland, can in no way neglect sport, in which it finds one of the most important instruments for the total education of the Spanish man" (BOE, 1941, p.1554). In this way, the head of the Spanish State, General Franco, delegated the organisation of Spanish sport to the FET y las JONS, as stated in article 2 of the aforementioned decree. The new responsibilities of the Sports Delegation included the activities of the Spanish Olympic Committee (COE) and the activities and coordination of all the sports federations. Its first president was José Moscardó Ituarte, a lieutenant general in the army, which showed the importance that General Franco would attach to the promotion of Spanish sport as a means of consolidating the regime.

Moscardó was the executive president of the reconstituted COE from 1937, with José Mesalles as secretary, José García Mayoral as treasurer, Ricardo Villalba Rubio as technical director and Jacinto Miquelarena as director of information and propaganda (Duránte, 2013, p.166). He accepted the position of president of the COE and the National Sports Council because, as he stated in an interview published by the newspaper *Marca* in 1938, in the middle of the Spanish Civil War, "I am a soldier who accepts what he is ordered to do; and then because I am flattered by the idea of collaborating, once the war is over, in the task of solving the problem of physical education in our country" (Moscardó, 1938).

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4.1. Sport and Foreign Policy

Franco used many formulas to stay in power in a national and international context that was very hostile to his interests. In foreign policy, he moved from a non-belligerent position and support for the Axis powers (Germany, Italy and Japan) to a position of neutrality, especially after the defeat of the Axis powers in the battle of Stalingrad (1943). In order to strengthen this image that it wanted to project abroad, the organisation of the Third Youth Games in Barcelona, with the common desire of the organisers to serve the fatherland (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1943, n. 24, p.2), stands out, because it was the preamble of the official Spanish bid to organise the International European Youth Games in 1944.

In this sense, the First National Congress of Physical Education was organised in October 1943, in which the Franco regime set itself the objective of "giving our country the prestige, the effort and that lofty vision, with full confidence in our men and in our destiny, which must be the norm for the future of the homeland" (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1943, n. 6, p. 4). The main conclusion of this first congress was, in the words of the organisers, to be united in "a holy zeal, in a holy love for the preservation and improvement of the virtues of our race, of our homeland" (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1943, n. 7, p.10).

To strengthen relations with Portugal, a neighbouring country and Franco's ally in the Spanish Civil War, the National Sports Delegation proposed a massive expansion of roller hockey in Spain, a sporting speciality in which Portugal excelled internationally. It was, in the words of the National Sports Delegation, "an ideal moment for an even greater strengthening of sporting relations between Spaniards and Portuguese" (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1943, n.8, p.14). The rest of Europe was experiencing the worst of the Second World War, so the only country with which Spain

could hold sporting competitions was Portugal. At that time, in addition to roller hockey, chess tournaments were held, in which Arturo Pomar, a prodigy in world chess, already shone. The aim of all these competitions was to demonstrate the spirit of competition that was a sign of the health of Franco's regime. In March 1945, a chess competition was held in Lisbon, where the National Secretary of the National Sports Delegation, Francisco Cadenas Blanco, exhorted all Spanish chess players to keep the prestige of Spain very high, stating that "if, in the course of the fight, you put up, or are put up by your opponent, the so-called Spanish game, I trust that you will know how to make yourselves worthy of it and impose your superiority" (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1945, n. 24, p.2).

The intensity of Spanish-Portuguese relations led to the creation of a Sports Relations Commission, which prepared sports competitions between the two countries on a worldwide basis. Each year a calendar of competitions was planned in sports such as athletics, handball, basketball, billiards, fencing, gymnastics, roller hockey, swimming, rowing and sailing (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1946, n. 36, p.7). The aim was to strengthen bilateral relations between two countries that shared a border and the same political situation: a fascist dictatorship led by General Franco in Spain and Antonio de Oliveira Salazar in Portugal.

4.2. The Role of Women in Sport

Sport was an important tool for consolidating the regime and the figure of the new head of state, General Franco, but also for integrating all levels of society. The National Delegation of the Youth Front (Delegación Nacional del Frente de Juventudes) was born on 6 December 1940 as an autonomous youth section of the Traditionalist Spanish Falange (FET) and the Councils of the National Syndicalist Offensive (JONS), which were renamed the National Movement (Movimiento Nacional) in the 1937 Unification Decree, the only legal party within Franco's regime. In this regard, the head of the National Movement's Sports Department, José María Gutiérrez del Castillo, declared that "we want to balance the brain and the muscles of our people, because from this balance, from this internal and external order, will come the great Spain" (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1944, n.11, p.3).

Sport was used to consolidate Franco's regime and to institutionalise it in all areas of society. Women were very cautiously included in the practice of sport, always under the guidance of the Women's Section of the Spanish Falange of the JONS, which from its creation on 12 July 1934 until its dissolution on 1 April 1977 was presided over by Pilar Primo de Rivera, sister of the party founder, José Antonio Primo de Rivera (Pérez Trompeta, 1996, p.165).

The role of the Women's Section was to help organise and supervise the entire organisation of women's sport through its network of provincial delegations throughout Spain. The guidelines were laid down by the Central Women's Education Department of the Women's Section and included organisational, purely sporting and also moral issues, since sport was ultimately another tool for consolidating the new social and political model that was being implemented in Spain since the end of the Spanish Civil War.

For example, in the organisation of the Sixth Edition of the National Basketball Championship in the third category for women, it was stipulated that all players should wear the party's official uniform on which the Women's Section depended, and it was strictly forbidden for players to go out at night after dinner unless they did so collectively with the permission of the provincial delegate of the Women's Section (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1945, n. 26, p.6).

The same applied to the 7th Women's Roller Hockey Championships, which were held at various venues from 17 February 1946. It was reiterated that all members of the various delegations should wear the official party uniform. If they did not wear it, they would not be received at the championship venues. The uniform, it was stressed, was the official party uniform with a black skirt, and the sportswomen could not wear civilian clothes at any time or under any circumstances during the sports competition. This was recorded at each of the competitions organised by the Women's Section and was channelled in the various circulars issued by the Central Women's Education Department of the Women's Section for each sports competition, regardless of the sport being played, whether it was roller hockey, basketball or the Seventh National Tennis Championships held in the city of Lérida from 23 to 29 September 1946.

Morality was enforced in the official dress and the compulsory attendance at religious services for sportswomen when they travelled to other cities to compete. It was clear that Spain was a national Catholic state. In the Eighth Women's Hockey World Cup, in section 2 on the rules of travel, guideline

number eleven states that "each comrade must wear at least four pairs of ordinary socks, as it is not possible to go without them". In guideline number twelve it was stated that "they must also carry a red beret and a black veil to go to Mass, and they must use one or the other according to the orders they receive at any given time" (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1947, n. 47, p. 57).

The same instructions regarding dress, behaviour, hygiene and obedience to the instructions of the Women's Section were maintained for each championship. At the Eighth Tennis Championships, held on 27 July 1948, sportswomen were required to "wear at least two complete uniforms so that they can present themselves perfectly clean at all times". Failure to comply with any of the rules of behaviour and discipline would result in the immediate expulsion of the tennis player at her own expense (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1948, n.65, p.30).

4.3. Sport and the Political Nation

In order to further extend the tentacles of the Franco regime into all sectors of society, a decree of 5 June 1944, signed by the Minister of National Education, José Ibáñez Martín, created the National Board of University Physical Education, chaired by the General Director of University Education, with a professor of physiology, a representative of the National Sports Delegation and a representative of the national headquarters of the Spanish University Union as members.

All of this led to an attempt at political control of all sporting events, as is expressly stated in Circular No. 1629 of the Spanish Mountaineering Federation, which states that "in all public events and in the writings produced by the federated societies, the discipline and styles characteristic of the national syndicalist state must be accurately manifested" (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1944, n.45, p. 5).

To this end, the political militancy of the Traditionalist Spanish Falange and the JONS was guaranteed for all male university sports teachers. It was a condition of being a party militant to be appointed as a teacher, as stated in the order of 11 September 1944, published in number 260 of the Official State Bulletin of 16 September. This condition was extended to all university athletes who wished to take part in the National University Games, such as those held in Madrid from 18 to 25 March 1945. Otherwise, they could be members of Franco's Youth Falanges.

The sportsmen and sportswomen who stood out for their work would be rewarded by the creation of new prizes promoted by the National Sports Delegation, such as the Luis de Arana Cup, the José Hermosa Cup and the García Dotor Cup, which would be added to the existing Stadium Cup and the Baron de Güell Cup. All of them would be published in various decrees signed by the National Sports Delegate, José Moscardó, under the precept "for God, for Spain and its National Syndicalist Revolution" (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1944, n.18, p.8). There was also an attempt to promote sport among the entire population with the introduction of the "sport voucher" on 1 January 1945, the main aim of which was to promote physical education and support sports that could not finance themselves.

In April 1945, just before the end of the Second World War in Europe, Juan Antonio Samaranch was appointed national roller hockey coach, a man who would eventually change the face of Spanish sport from the presidency of the Spanish Olympic Committee (COE) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) itself. From the first moment, he became a man of trust for the President of the National Sports Delegation, Lieutenant General José Moscardó, especially as the Spanish national team began to achieve international sporting successes, including the 1951 World Championships held in the city of Barcelona.

All sports were used by the regime to consolidate its image and that of the head of state, Francisco Franco. One of the most popular sports in the middle of the 20th century was cycling. Spain had great champions and organised one of the three great stage tours. The Cycling Tour of Spain aimed to match the prestige of the Giro d'Italia and the Tour de France, two races that were suspended during the Second World War. For this reason, the National Sports Delegation was determined that the Cycling Tour of Spain would draw the world's attention to Spain. They thought that "in order to turn the eyes of the world to Spain, we need these organisations with more proof of our values, confronting them with foreigners, if you like; but at least to arouse the spirits of those here" (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1945, n.27, p.18).

On 15 July 1945, issue 268 of the Boletín del Movimiento de la FET y las JONS published a decree approving the Organic Statute of the National Sports Delegation. It was signed by the Secretary General

of the Movement, José Luis Arrese, and included a thorough renewal of the functions and responsibilities of the National Sports Delegation. Article 2, section e, makes very clear the intentions and use of sport by the Francoist regime. It explicitly states that the National Sports Delegation aims to "promote, direct and discipline Spanish physical education and sport, for training according to the rules of the Movement" (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1945, n.26, p.6).

A few days earlier, on 4 July 1945, at the presentation of the National Sports Awards, the National Sports Delegate, José Moscardó, emphasised the idea of subordinating sport to the interests of the state. In his annual speech to the assembly of guests and prize-winners, he said: "We have come together to glorify certain values and to promise you new dates for rejoicing on the occasion of greater glorious sporting events, as a symbol of the glorification of our homeland, which we have all defended and which today we swear to continue defending together around the Leader and until the end. Long live Spain! Long live Franco!" (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1945, n.28, p.45).

Sport was used to normalise the social patterns established by the regime and to reinforce the concept of a unitary, Catholic, conservative nation. Every element could be used to consolidate the idea of a nation that had been defined since the establishment of the dictatorship. The bulletins of the National Sports Delegation set the standard for laws, orders and compulsory instructions. In issue 31 of November 1945, Pedro Termens wrote an article entitled "Passion in Sport", in which he stated that "Spain should follow this path, in the certainty that its sporting masses, properly guided, could later become disciplined masses who would devote all their determination and energy to the future of the nation". Sport was yet another instrument in the construction of a particular model of nationhood in which democracy played a subordinate role, since the regime was committed to an organic democracy in which the organs of citizen participation were censored and restricted. This required, as the article points out, a disciplined and oriented mass obedient to the established power.

The aim was not only to create a model nation, but also to use sport to promote moral and social guidelines. These guidelines were positive in the rules of organisation and conduct and were made explicit in the federation's regulations. At the end of 1945, the Spanish Pelota Federation drew up its regulations. Article 5 states that "it is a general rule of the Federation and all its bodies and representatives to promote the development of the sport in its amateur and professional aspects, within the purest hygienic concept, both physically and morally" (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1945, n.36, p.13).

Article 18 of the statutes of the Spanish Federation of Motorcycling, approved on 17 July 1946, went even further in this concept of the morality that sport should impose on society. It stated that "discussions of a political, military or religious nature are strictly forbidden within the F.E.M., insofar as they deviate from the instructions received from the State through its representative bodies" (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1946, n.43, p.31).

The work of nation-building through sports was also recognized from a journalistic or literary perspective. Thus, the National Sports Delegation instituted the awarding of national prizes to newspapers and journalists who had distinguished themselves in the service of the nation. In the 1946 edition, the prize was awarded posthumously to Manuel Fernández Cuesta, founder and editor of the newspaper *Marca*, who had died on 5 October 1945 and was one of the most trusted men of Manuel Hedilla, the second national leader of the FE de la JONS, successor to the party's founder, José Antonio Primo de Rivera.

If there were any doubts about the use of sport to glorify the personality of the Head of State, General Franco, they were dispelled by resolutions such as those of the First National Plenary Assembly of Physical Education and Sport, held at the Sports House in Madrid from 25 to 28 March. The first conclusion of the report of these working days states that it was necessary "to reiterate, on this occasion of the first plenary meeting, the firm support of Spanish sport for the Head of State, renewing its testimony of the utmost respect and subordination" (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1946, núm.36, p.13).

Strengthening the nation and all its symbols was a top priority. The use of national symbols such as the coat of arms, the anthem and the flag was regulated. On 24 July 1946, the Spanish Athletics Federation approved the statutes that governed its organisation and operation. Chapter V regulated the badges to be worn by the winners of each of the special athletics events. In article 44, section a, it was established that "the absolute champions of the field or the track will wear, during the following season, a jersey with the following characteristics: white, horizontally crossed on the chest, with the national flag 15 centimetres wide".

Later, on 22 April 1948, the Executive Committee of the National Sports Delegation, with a view to the 1948 London Olympics, decided to adopt a uniform for the national teams in all sports when they played an international match. It was decided that the uniform should consist of a chestnut-red waistband and white shorts. The Spanish coat of arms would be embroidered at an appropriate height on the left upper chest, at a size of eight centimetres. Excluded from the application of this rule were those sports whose clothing was internationally established (fencing, swimming, etc.), which would bear only the national coat of arms.

A year earlier, on 1 January 1947, the National Sports Delegation had designed a gold medal to reward champions in athletics, swimming and gliding. The reverse of the coin was to bear a symbol of the competitor's choice: victory, faith, honour or sport. These were all messages with a symbolism that evoked all the values that the Franco regime wanted to impose on sport in all its aspects (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1947, n.45, p.5).

For the whole system of compliance with the regime to work, the National Sports Delegation ensured that all the directors of the various federations were members of the National Movement, the only legal party that existed in Spain and which was led by the Head of State, General Franco. This was reflected in the statutes of the various federations. An example of this is the internal organisation of the Spanish Table Tennis Federation, approved by the Executive Committee of the National Sports Delegation on 21 November 1946. Article 8, section b, states that the composition of the federation's executive committee should include at least two members who were militants of the National Movement, in order to guarantee that decisions were taken in accordance with the guidelines set by the single party.

The regime also used sport as a system for rewarding and thanking all those it considered to have been involved in defending and promoting the dictatorship. Thus, for example, the National Rowing Federation, in article 23 of its statutes, recognised "the legal advantages granted to former combatants of the National Armies of our glorious War of Liberation, former combatants of the Blue Division and knights mutilated in the war for the Fatherland, and therefore they will be granted the prerogatives and privileges of a general nature and the specific ones agreed by the National Sports Delegation".

The most important thing for Franco was to consolidate his image and his regime, and every element of sport was used for this purpose. The national federations enshrined this subservience to the dictator and the fatherland in their statutes. On 20 May 1947, the statutes of the Spanish Swimming Federation were approved. Article 2 states that "by doing everything necessary to achieve the highest level of efficiency and expansion of Spanish swimming, it will bring the greatest honour to the fatherland abroad and contribute to the creation of healthy and strong youth, both in body and mind" (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1947, n. 50, p.18).

4.4. Spain's Role in the London Olympic Games (1948)

The end of the Second World War meant the gradual normalisation of international sporting competition. There was a return to international competitions at all levels, including the celebration of the ultimate contest between nations, the Olympic Games. The last Olympic Games were held in Berlin in 1936. They were a propaganda tool for the Nazi regime and its chancellor, Adolf Hitler. The World War had prevented the next two editions from being held, but in 1948 there was a date in time: the London Olympics. These were the Olympic Games that should have been held in 1944 but were postponed for four years until the end of a war in which most of the Western world was involved.

The United Kingdom had won the war and although London was devastated by the effects of the war, it worked hard to build the structures that would house the various Olympic venues. From 29 July to 14 August 1948, the British capital would host the 14th modern Olympic Games, with the participation of 4104 athletes (3714 men and 390 women) from 59 countries (Olympiad, 1951).

It was an ideal opportunity for Spain to break out of the international isolation that Franco had suffered since the end of the Spanish Civil War. Although Spanish sport was in a precarious situation, lacking the financial and material resources to properly plan a sporting event of the magnitude of the Olympic Games, the Spanish Olympic Committee (COE), chaired by Lieutenant General José Moscardó, had accepted the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) invitation for Spain to take part in the sporting competition.

On the 30th of May 1947, the National Secretary of Sport, Francisco Cadenas Blanco, issued instructions to the Athletics, Boxing, Cycling, Equestrian, Fencing, Gymnastics, Pentagón, Rowing,

Shooting, Wrestling, Sailing, Basketball and Football Federations to prepare for the Olympic Games with the participation of teams and athletes in each of these disciplines. Months later, at the Second Plenary Session of the National Council of Sports and Physical Education, held in Madrid from 11 to 13 December 1947, Francisco Cadenas Blanco read out the report of the Executive Committee of the National Sports Delegation. In it, Cadenas Blanco stated: "Spain's performance in London must be closely watched by all, and any unlucky performance of our colours would be fully exploited by those adverse foreign elements, who would undoubtedly be greatly comforted by an inadequate performance of our athletes. In view of this, Cadenas Blanco requested the following:

We must make every effort to carry out the Olympic preparations with the greatest fervour, with the most appropriate study of the possibilities, advantages or disadvantages, and without at any time creating in the participants the morale of defeat before the quality of the athletes they will meet in London, taking advantage of the qualities and racial characteristics of impetus, nerve, agility and courage with which God has endowed our athletes. (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1948, n.57, p.8).

Cadenas Blanco ended his speech with the traditional Long live Spain, long live Franco! and wished all the members of the Spanish delegation a good sporting result, despite the limited financial resources they had been given to prepare adequately for the Olympic Games.

This was confirmed at the end of the plenary session by the deputy secretary of the sections of the National Sports Delegation, Manuel Valdés, who recognised that sport was in decline in Spain and called on all the presidents of the different federations to solve the problem of the return of the London Olympic Games of 1948, because "the military and political power of a nation is linked to the sporting index. Sport is a national task" (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1948, n.57, p.15).

There were no great expectations of good results, but at least a good image was to be left behind. The Spanish representative to the IOC, Fernando Suárez de Tangil, Count of Vallellano, hoped that Spain's participation would give the world brilliant proof of its sporting and cultural potential and achievements, adding that "it would not matter if we were last if we had put our great will to be first" (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1948, n. 59, p. 9). As the date of the opening of the Olympic Games approached, the regime encouraged the presence of Spanish athletes because, as the Bulletin of the National Sports Delegation of July 1948 editorialised, "the essential thing will be that Spain will be there and that its flag will cut through the English air at Wembley in the most important diplomatic conference of recent times".

Before leaving for London, José Moscardó, President of the Council of Europe and head of the mission to the 14th Olympiad, signed a circular on 19 July 1948 to organise the Spanish delegation in the British capital. He made the regime's intentions in London very clear: "I hope and demand that everyone who is Spanish and has the great honour of representing the homeland in such an important sporting event as the Olympic Games will not only fulfil their duty but, if necessary, go beyond it". He added the following to this proclamation:

Our team must be exemplary in all respects, and its members must remember that they are not fighting for a club or a region, but that they are carrying the most honourable representation of Spain, a motto that they must all engrave in their hearts and a slogan that they must always use during their stay and performance in England. (Delegación Nacional de Deportes de la FET y las JONS, 1948, n.64, p.5).

At the 1948 Olympic Games in London, Spain won a silver medal in equestrian sport in the Grand Prix of Nations, won by the riders José Navarro Morenés, Jaime García Cruz and Marcelino Gabilán. Likewise, the boxer Álvaro Vicente Doménech came fourth in the flyweight category and the shooter Ángel León sixth in the fifty-metre pistol (Durántez, 2013, p.182).

The poor results of the Spanish delegation were expected by the sports authorities, given the budget and infrastructure that Spain had at its disposal at a time of great economic hardship and international diplomatic isolation. With a view to the next Olympic Games, to be held in Helsinki in 1952, they proposed the implementation of a strategy to promote sport at national level by increasing the economic resources allocated to sport and by building infrastructures such as swimming pools, athletics tracks and playing fields, because, as the editorial of the official bulletin of the National Sports Delegation,

number 65, published in September 1948, stated, "we have an abundance of raw materials and our race is a race of winners who know how to forge their successes through tenacious, calm and efficient work".

The prospects for Spanish sport were bleak. In the same year, 1948, Spain took part in the 5th Winter Olympics in the French town of Saint Moritz, where the six skiers who took part did not win any Olympic medals. Much remained to be done, but Franco and his regime knew that sport could be a tool of political consolidation and social propaganda in their struggle to lay the foundations of a dictatorship that would end with the death of General Franco in 1975.

5. Conclusions

In its first phase, which formally lasted from the end of the Spanish Civil War (1939) to the end of international isolation (1950), Francoism had the classic characteristics of autarchic and authoritarian fascism.

The consolidation of the leader's leadership was articulated from very different spheres, as all the resources of the state were placed at the service of the exaltation of the figure of the leader, in this case Francisco Franco. Sport, as a mass phenomenon, is a perfect tool for creating mechanisms of collective consciousness around the figure of the leader and the prototypical social model of his ideology. Firstly, it facilitated international relations and the country's international presence through the participation of national teams in international sporting competitions. The Franco regime used sport to promote diplomatic relations with Portugal and other neighbouring countries when international competitions resumed after the end of the Second World War (1945). Particularly noteworthy was the emphasis the Franco regime placed on Spain's participation in the London Olympic Games (1948) and the St Moritz Winter Olympics (1948). Spain's prestige was put to the test, but above all the regime wanted an international presence in a context where Spain was internationally isolated.

Secondly, sport became a mechanism for civic participation with the institutionalisation and establishment of all sporting competitions at national level in different areas: professional and amateur. In the first phase of Francoism, professional sport was reduced to a few areas such as football, but amateur sport began to be organised under the leadership of the National Sports Delegation of the FET and the JONS, which channelled and coordinated the action of women's sport with the collaboration of the Women's Section, university sport with the collaboration of the Youth Front, and the rest of the sports with the help of the various sports federations, which had to adapt their statutes to the conveniences of Francoism.

Thirdly, sport promoted a model of society, family and morality through the rules of behaviour and the organisation of sporting competitions. This was particularly important in women's sport, under the guidance of the Women's Section led by Pilar Primo de Rivera. Women had to maintain a morality of modesty, submission and obedience to the requirements of the regime as mothers and wives. The orders and guidelines for behaviour in each sporting competition were based on this previous pattern, devised by the Movement's General Secretary. At the same time, the rest of university and federation sport also conformed to these parameters of social control, since the presidents and a large proportion of the members of the various federations were obliged to be members of the National Movement. This guaranteed obedience to the leader and the preservation of his public image at each sporting competition, where it was not uncommon for Franco himself or government ministers to appear in order to reinforce their institutional presence.

Finally, sport was the perfect altar on which to raise the prestige of the nation when international successes were achieved, such as the first Olympic medal at the London Olympics in 1948. It was the cover to exalt the value of the race and of the nation. It was a perfect form of propaganda because it was a mass activity and Francoism was always keen to control the mood and morale of Spanish society, which had been divided at the end of the Spanish Civil War.

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