

## 7 Switzerland's International Matches during the Second World War: Sport and Politics, Continuities and Traditions

In contrast to the 'Great War', football continued to be played in Europe during the Second World War, at least until 1942, both in terms of national championships as well as international matches.<sup>1</sup> At first sight this may come as a surprise, as most countries were dealing with major upheavals and the international institutions such as the *Comité International Olympique* (CIO) and *the Fédération Internationale de Football Association* (FIFA) had to significantly restrict their activities when others, like for example the international federation in fencing were put under the control of the Axis Power.<sup>2</sup>

There were two reasons for the special position of football during the interwar period. First, the professionalization of the sport and the creation of international competitions had made the sport extremely popular. Football had become an important cultural element in Europe and attracted not only workers, but all social classes.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, sport – and especially football – had begun to play a role in international relations. Governments realized that football could be used as a form of co-operation and that it could serve as a 'barometer' for the nation's strength, which was true in particular for totalitarian regimes but also for democracy as well demonstrated by Peter Beck for the England case.<sup>4</sup> Based loosely on Clausewitz,

1 Cf. DIETSCHY, *Histoire du Football*, 137–178. See also the special issue co-ordinated by Paul Dietschy in: *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 268 (2018), no 2.

2 Cf. BONDE, *Football with the foe*.

3 Cf. MAICON, *The politicization of football*, 534.

4 BECK, *Scoring for Britain*.

football was seen as an extension of politics by other means.<sup>5</sup> The result was an increasing number of international friendlies and competitions between club teams and national teams.

Because of its popularity, football was able to ignore wars as long as the players and spectators were safe. Especially in times of extreme tension, international football matches provided a good opportunity to bring some 'normality' into everyday life and – at least for the duration of the game – let everyone forget about the war.

This chapter take into consideration the Swiss case and will propose to investigate the continuing relationships of the Swiss national team during the Second World War. Through the examination of the media coverage of four international matches that Switzerland played at the beginning of the war we want to highlight two processes. On the one side, the fact that these games reveal a tradition of exchanges which existed since a long time in football's field that permit to overpass the international political context. On the other, and in the meantime, these games were also a wonderful opportunity to maintain diplomatic contact during this very difficult time.

Our analysis is based on documents from the archives of the FIFA, the *Association Suisse de Football et d'Athlétisme* (ASFA) and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. In addition – besides commemorative publications in the FIFA archive – the chapter analyses several newspapers from French part of Switzerland: the journal *Le Sport Suisse*, daily newspapers such as *La Gazette de Lausanne* and *Le Journal de Genève*, as well as the French sports newspaper *L'Auto*.

The chapter begins with a part that will broad the context of European elite (professional) football just before the beginning of the War. Then, we will focus more precisely on the coverage of four international game

- Italy vs Switzerland on 3 March 1940
- France vs Switzerland on 8 March 1942
- Switzerland B vs France Libre on 24 May 1942
- Switzerland vs Croatia on 10 April 1940.

5 Cf. HUGHES AND OWEN, *The Continuation of Politics*; HERZOG, *German Blitzkrieg Football*.

## The interwar period: A 'Golden Time' for Football on the European Continent?

During the interwar period, football on the continent was, on the one hand, determined by conflicts between amateur and professional sport and, on the other hand, by the organization of major international tournaments such as '*La Coupe L'Europe Centrale*'.<sup>6</sup> What turned out to be tremendously important for the popularity of football in Europe on an international level was the introduction of professional structures, which facilitated national football championships and a dynamization of the game and drew large crowds into the stadiums every weekend. As a result of the coverage in the press and on the radio, football established itself as a spectacle for both the masses and the media.<sup>7</sup>

### *Professionalism and International Competitions*

In the 1920s, the fact that most continental European football associations introduced professional, top-level football paved the way for this development. The process was instigated by the football associations in the countries of the Danube Delta: Austria in 1924, followed by Hungary in 1925 and Czechoslovakia one year later. Other countries such as Italy, France and Switzerland followed suit. The countries' close geographical proximity suggests that mutual influence may have been a determining factor.

In August 1926, Italy introduced the *Viareggio* Charter, which regulated the status of football players.<sup>8</sup> Like other totalitarian regimes, the fascist government had initially been hostile towards football. However, it soon recognized the popular sport's potential to strengthen national unity and, in the end, also allowed for players to be paid. The creation of

6 Cf. QUIN, *La Coupe de l'Europe Centrale*.

7 Cf. CARTER, 'Managing the Media'; cf. ISOLA, *Les hérauts du foot*; HAYNES, 'Lobby'.

8 See IMPIGLIA, *Fußball in Italien*, 152 f.

Serie A in 1929, which combined the teams from the northern as well as the southern cities (such as Bari and Naples) in one league, also turned out to be a recipe for success. In an attempt to limit the football clubs' attachment to their own traditions and to contain fans' acts of violence, as this contradicted the political order it aimed for, the regime sought greater control over and greater influence on the world of football.<sup>9</sup> Teams such as Juventus Turin and Bologna emerged as the strongest in Europe, and stars such as Raouf Orsi or Giuseppe Meazza fascinated football fans even beyond Italy's borders.<sup>10</sup>

In contrast, football in France experienced a vigorous process of liberalization after the First World War.<sup>11</sup> At the beginning of the 1920s, many top players openly negotiated their salaries, and the issue of players' salaries was discussed with great polemic.<sup>12</sup> Opponents of the professionalization of the sport highlighted the clubs' economic problems and brought up the sport's moral objectives. Among the supporters of professional football were journalists such as Emmanuel Gambardella and Gabriel Hanot. They argued that the improvement in the quality of the game, which attracted more spectators into the stadiums and, in addition, had improved the standard of the national team, had only been possible as a result of the sport's professionalization.<sup>13</sup> As the national teams of many neighbouring countries were also improving their game, more and more cases of illegal professionalism were uncovered in France. When, thanks to the initiative of the car manufacturer Peugeot, a tournament between professional teams was able to take place in Sochaux, the *Bureau fédéral*, the national association, found that it had been presented with a *fait accompli* and decided, not without *resignation* to legalize professional football.<sup>14</sup>

9 Cf. DIETSCHY, 'Pugni, bastoni e rivoltelle'; cf. ID., Sport, éducation physique et fascisme.

10 Cf. LANFRANCHI, Bologna; cf. ID., La consommation du spectacle sportif.

11 Cf. DIETSCHY, 1918–1920, des tranchées aux stades.

12 Football association, 5 June 1920.

13 Cf. WAHL, Le footballeur français.

14 Cf. GRÜN, Le débat amateurisme/professionnalisme, 130; cf. WAHL, Un professionnalisme de résignation en France.

Just as in France, Swiss football – practise which saw an incredible development in the country during the interwar period<sup>15</sup> – was also shaken by the dispute between the defenders of amateur sport and the supporters of professionalism.<sup>16</sup> The arguments that were proffered were similar to those in other countries. Since the second half of the 1920s, an increasing number of cases where covert payments had been made to players had come to light, and attempts to ‘seduce’ new players and players from other clubs seemed to be on the rise. In 1927, FC Aarau complained in their bulletin that the top clubs no longer made the effort to train young players, but instead tried to recruit players from around the country ‘with big bribes’.<sup>17</sup>

The Swiss Football Association [*Schweizerischer Fußball Verband*] (SFV) tried to solve the problem. However, new officials in the governing bodies of clubs and associations, such as Otto Eicher, were more open towards professionalism. On 13 April 1930, *Sport Suisse* reported the following:

[...] le développement du football est stabilisé ou à peu près. Notre sport est dominé par les facteurs économiques [...] en un mot, les clubs de série inférieure devraient abandonner de plein gré ces ambitions qui empoisonnent la vie sportive du pays, et se mettre à cultiver le sport pour le sport [...]. Nous ne croyons pas qu’une scission soit nécessaire pour opérer cette réforme, qui peut se faire dans le cadre de l’A.S.F.A. Voyez l’Angleterre, dont la fédération de football groupe sous son égide les amateurs comme les professionnels. Pourquoi n’en ferions-nous pas autant?<sup>18</sup>

15 Cf. BRÄNDLE AND KOLLER, 4 zu 2.

16 Cf. VONNARD AND QUIN, *Eléments pour une histoire du professionnalisme*.

17 GUGGISBERG, *75 ans de Ligue nationale ASF*, 19 f.

18 *Le Sport suisse*, 23 April 1930: ‘Football’s development has stabilized, or at least almost. Our sport is dominated by economic factors [...] In a word, the clubs in the lower leagues should voluntarily rid themselves of their ambitions, which are poisoning the country’s sporting life, and cultivate sport for the sake of sport. We do not believe that it is necessary to have a separation in order to carry out this reform, which can be realized within the framework of the A.S.F.A. Look at England, where the national association unites amateurs and professionals under one roof. Why don’t we do the same?’

The decision to permit professional football was finally made at the assembly of delegates on 15/16 July 1933 in Vevey. Swiss football now followed the example of its neighbours; a new era began. In addition to the trend towards professionalism, several international matches were scheduled during the interwar period. These matches benefited from improving means of transport and travel, attracted more and more spectators into the stadiums and increased the popularity of the game. Finally, in 1927, a framework was created within which the international tournament of European club teams, *La Coupe de l'Europe Centrale*, could take place, followed by the World Cup *Coupe du monde* in Uruguay in 1930, making FIFA president Jules Rimet's dream a reality.<sup>19</sup>

The popularity of football and other sports had the consequence that sport began to play an important role in international relations during the interwar period, as the example of the World Cup in Italy demonstrates. At this time, it became customary for teams to arrange regular first and second legs.

### *International relationships and professionalism*

International competitions turned into a stage on which it was possible to display national strength.<sup>20</sup> However, the positions in terms of sport and geopolitics varied – Italy and Switzerland are striking examples. In Mussolini's Italy, sport was generally used in order to publicly showcase the alleged superiority of the 'New Man'.<sup>21</sup> Mussolini himself was glorified as the country's first sportsman in the press.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, the Swiss government assumed a position of political neutrality. Once the sport-political course had been set, very little changed fundamentally, even after the introduction of professionalism.

19 Cf. DIETSCHY, French Sport.

20 Cf. QUIN AND VONNARD, 'Par delà le Gothard'.

21 Cf. MILZA, Le football italien, 49–58; MARTIN, Football and fascism.

22 Cf. DIETSCHY, De l'ardistisme sportif'.

International games played by French, Italian and Swiss national teams (1920–1944)

Switzerland	Victories	Tied games	Defeats	Total
1920–1926	16 (36%)	11 (25%)	17 (39%)	44
1927–1934	10 (18%)	9 (16%)	37 (66%)	56
1935–1944	19 (33%)	8 (14%)	31 (53%)	58
France	Victories	Tied games	Defeats	Total
1920–1926	11 (31%)	2 (6%)	22 (63%)	35
1927–1934	14 (26%)	7 (13%)	33 (61%)	54
1935–1944	14 (44%)	3 (9%)	15 (47%)	32
Italy	Victories	Tied games	Defeats	Total
1920–1926	16 (41%)	10 (26%)	13 (33%)	39
1927–1934	35 (61%)	13 (23%)	9 (16%)	57
1935–1944	29 (72%)	8 (20%)	3 (8%)	40

The statistics show a significant increase in international matches after the introduction of professionalism. This led to improved performance, as is evident in Switzerland's victories against England and Germany in 1938.<sup>23</sup> Thanks to a well-organized professionalism and excellent framework conditions, Italy had the best and most successful national team in the world in the 1930s. The fact that the team won the 1934 and 1938 World Cups as well as *La Coupe de l'Europe Centrale* in 1930 and 1935 is impressive. In all three countries, the number of the national teams' victories also increased after professionalism was introduced. Although professionalism was not the only contributing factor to this success, it played an important role.

In any case, the 'golden time' of European football began in the second half of the 1930s, just as international political tensions were starting to grow. There were many signs that pointed towards war, such as the anti-fascist and pacifist actions of the *Front populaire* in France, the Italian activities during the 1938 Munich conference, or the plan of

23 Cf. QUIN, *La Suisse face à la Grande Allemagne*.

a 'national defence' in Switzerland, which aimed to prepare the population for potential war.<sup>24</sup>

Italy and Switzerland, as well as the host country France, took part in the games of the 1938 World Cup. However, despite these successes there were increasing doubts about professionalism and its viability – ever since the Great Depression of 1929, professional football clubs throughout Europe had been facing considerable financial difficulties. Although the introduction of professionalism was intended to stabilize the economic situation of football clubs, it did not fulfil this aim.

Thus, the days of professionalism were soon numbered in Switzerland. The geopolitical tensions contributed to the 'conservative' conviction of the bourgeois block that professionalism would run football into the ground.<sup>25</sup> At the beginning of the 1938–39 season, the ASF revoked the introduction of professional football and decided to organize the Swiss championship as an amateur tournament.<sup>26</sup> Even though financial difficulties, as well as sporting and organizational problems that international competitions such as the Mitropa-Cup had to face, played a role, there were also ideological motives. For example, there was little acceptance of calling professional sport a normal 'profession'. In this sense, Paul Ruoff wrote: 'jamais aucun cachet ni aucune somme de transfert ne compensera ce que représente une bonne formation professionnelle et un bon métier'.<sup>27</sup>

In France, where it took a long time for professionalism to establish itself, most players were considered semi-amateurs into the 1950s, for which many expressed regret.<sup>28</sup> In 1938, Gabriel Hanot argued that it was absolutely necessary 'que nos joueurs professionnels de l'élite soient vraiment des professionnels. Leur place n'est pas dans le lit de la grasse matinée, ni autour de la table de belote mais au stade, matin et soir, comme en Angleterre'.<sup>29</sup>

24 Cf. WEBER, *La France des années*, 30; cf. MOOSER, *Die 'Geistige Landesverteidigung'*.

25 Cf. JOST, *Politique culturelle*.

26 Cf. BERTHOUD, QUIN AND VONNARD, *Le football suisse*.

27 RUOFF, *Le livre d'or du football suisse*, 62: 'a fee or a transfer fee will never be able to balance out the meaning of good, professional training and a good occupation'.

28 Cf. WAHL AND LANFRANCHI, *Les footballeurs professionnels*.

29 Football, 15 June 1938: 'that our professional top players should be real professionals. They do not have their place in bed to have a lie in, nor at the table in order to play Belote, but in the stadium, morning and evening, like in England'.



The historian Laurent Grün commented on this issue shortly before the outbreak of the war, arguing that the seven years' experience of professionalism had clearly shown that football had manoeuvred itself into a perilous position as a result of its only half-heartedly completed departure from amateurism.<sup>30</sup>

It has become clear, then, that within European football different paths led to professional football. Switzerland as well as its neighbours Italy and Austria had chosen professionalism, while football players in France played as semi-professionals. Germany was characterized by a disingenuous pseudo-amateurism until the creation of the *Bundesliga* in 1963.<sup>31</sup> These developments are rooted in the traditions of the respective countries and shaped by tournaments in their role as multipliers, which has given football and its role in international relations important impulses. These factors are likely to have been among the reasons why football continued to be played on the continent after the outbreak of the war, in contrast to the First World War. The most important championships and international matches still took place. Between 1 January and 31 July 1942 no less than fourteen international matches were organized in Europe.<sup>32</sup>

### 1940–1943: Football Carries on during the War

Because of its 'neutral' status, Switzerland was not directly involved in the Second World War.<sup>33</sup> However, this neutrality took on a defensive form, as Switzerland reserved the right to defend itself with its own army, which was mobilized throughout the war, and to arrange a national retreat into the Alps in the event of war. The national football team most certainly played a role

30 GRÜN, *Le débat amateurisme/professionnalisme*.

31 Cf. HAVEMANN, *Fußball unterm Hakenkreuz*, 78–101; ID., *Geld und Ideologie*; ID., *Samstags um halb 4*, 53–68; EGGERS, *Profifußball im Amateurverband*.

32 FIFA archive, Ivo Schrickler, letter to executive committee, 15 August 1942.

33 Cf. BOURGEOIS, *La représentation*; SCHNEIDER, 'Un moyen précieux'.

in the continued international relations. From September 1939 until the end of 1942, Switzerland took part in no less than thirteen matches, including 'unofficial' games. Four of these games will be examined more closely below.

*Switzerland vs Italy: Offside war*

In the first match during the war years, on 3 March 1940, Switzerland played Italy in the Mussolini-Stadium in Turin. Although Italy only joined the war in June, the context is perceptible in the media coverage, for instance when a journalist wrote that most Swiss players were 'en grand partie mobilisés'.<sup>34</sup> This also applies to an article published in *Sport Suisse*, which links the Swiss team's physical limits with mobilization:

Il est bien certain que, vu l'énergie qui a été dépensée tout au long de ces 45 première minutes, les suisses ne pourront continuer en seconde mi-temps à maintenir la même allure. Nous ne pouvons pas oublier que la majorité de nos hommes sont actuellement mobilisés. Quelques heures encore avant le match, ils portaient l'uniforme.<sup>35</sup>

However, generally the media tended to focus on the game itself, just as the championship also proceeded in the usual way. According to Paul Dietschy, who was referring, among others, to newspapers such as *La Stampa* or *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, the Group A championship in the autumn of 1941 had made it possible 'de combattre les doutes qui commençaient à gagner une partie de la population italienne. Les foules qui remplissaient les stades certifiaient que les Italiens gardaient le moral'.<sup>36</sup> Despite the Swiss players' lack of training, the press reported on the match as though it was a normal

34 Journal de Genève, 4 March 1940.

35 Le Sport suisse, 6 March 1940: 'When one considers the energy with which the Swiss team played during the first forty-five minutes, it is clear that they won't be able to carry on like that during the second half. We must not forget that most of our men are currently mobilized. A few hours before the game, they were still wearing their uniform.'

36 DIETSCHY, *Guerre et football professionnel*, 17: 'that the doubts which had taken hold of parts of the Italian population were defeated. The masses that filled the stadiums confirmed that the Italians had not yet lost their spirit.'

game and commented on the performance of both individual players and the teams from a sporting point of view. The articles published in *Sport Suisse* emphasized the fact that the Italian national team was in a transitional phase. In any case, after winning the second World Cup title, the team had suffered two defeats against Switzerland and Germany.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the picture painted in the media of the small, brave, courageous Switzerland taking on the great Italy attested to the normality of the sporting relations between the two countries.

[...] si l'Italie est forte et ça ne fait pas l'ombre d'un doute, elle aura devant elle onze joueurs suisses résolus à lutter jusqu'au bout. C'est dans cette lutte sportive que beaucoup trouveront leur joie, la vraie joie. Nous sommes de tout cœur avec eux tout en souhaitant bonne chance à nos représentants.<sup>38</sup>

In this way, sport helped to spread perceptions of national idiosyncrasies.<sup>39</sup> The Swiss players had fought the 'professional', transalpine team with enthusiasm and courage.<sup>40</sup> Paul Dubois stressed the unity of the Swiss team:

[...] dans les rues de Turin, après le match, tous les suisses sentaient qu'une force invisible les avait réunis. C'était pour leur faire comprendre que le monde n'est pas encore arrivé à ses extrêmes limites. L'espoir doit vivre dans les cœurs, car si beaucoup d'hommes comprennent mal les lois divines, tous n'ont pas voulu suivre cette marche vers la ruine certaine. C'est une grande consolation.<sup>41</sup>

37 Le Sport suisse, 6 March 1940.

38 Le Sport suisse, 28 February 1940: 'If the Italians are strong, and about this there exists not the shadow of a doubt, they will face eleven Swiss players who are determined to fight until the end. Many will take pleasure from this competition, great pleasure. We wholeheartedly support them and wish our team good luck.'

39 Cf. ANDERSON, L'Imaginaire national.

40 Journal de Genève, 4 March 1940.

41 Le Sport suisse, 13 March 1940: 'After the game, all the Swiss in the streets of Turin felt that an invisible force had brought them together and they realized that the world had not yet reached its limits. Hope must live on in the hearts, because even if many people misunderstand the divine laws, this does not mean that all wanted to follow this road to ruin. This is a big comfort.'

Finally, *Sport Suisse* highlighted the political importance of football as a good opportunity to cultivate international relations between the two countries:

[...] de nombreux sportifs suisses [ont] fait le déplacement de Turin. Notons entre autres M. M. J. Peney, conseiller administratif de la ville de Genève; M. Henninger, président du Comité olympique suisse, Greiner, membre du Comité de la Ligue Nationale [...] le] dimanche matin, joueurs et officiels, accompagnés de M. Peney, se [sont rendus] sur les monuments des morts de la grande guerre et des victimes de la révolution fasciste où ils déposèrent de superbes couronnes.<sup>42</sup>

Over a period of several years, the matches against Italy evolved into important events for the sporting authorities, the press and the Swiss audience, and became a tradition that connected the two countries. It is for this reason that the Swiss authorities attempted to arrange further matches against Italy in 1941 and 1943, although Italy was gradually decreasing its number of international games.<sup>43</sup> However, Ottorino Barassi was against this initiative and argued that it was necessary to first seek the agreement of the Italian government.<sup>44</sup> Finally, and supported by sports policy, the Swiss Football Association was forced to find other opponents and Switzerland played a home game against Croatia on 4 April 1943.<sup>45</sup>

Switzerland also shared football traditions with neighbouring countries such as Germany and France. A document filed in the Swiss Federal Archive shows there was interest in a match against Germany in the spring of 1940:

42 Le Sport suisse, 6 March 1940: 'Many Swiss athletes went to Turin. Among others, M. M. J. Peney, governing board of the city of Geneva, M. Henninger, president of the Swiss Olympic Committee, Greiner, member of the Committee of the National League. [...] On Sunday, players and officials, accompanied by M. Peney, visited the memorials which had been built for the dead of the great war and the victims of the fascist revolution and laid down magnificent wreaths.'

43 Swiss Football Association, archive, memo, meeting of the central board, 28 April 1942.

44 Swiss Federal Archive, E 2001 D, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, letters from the department to the Swiss Federal Council, 6 February 1941.

45 Swiss Federal Archive, E2001 D, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, letters from the department to the Federal Department of Defence, 18 March 1943.

[...] le Comité de l'Association suisse de football se rend parfaitement compte qu'il n'est pas possible de jouer contre une équipe allemande sans jouer également contre une équipe française et viceversa.<sup>46</sup>

Although such considerations were the result of Switzerland's neutrality, Switzerland was also interested in close sporting relations with the two countries. The media reiterated Switzerland's interest in sporting continuities, regardless of political changes. In this sense, football offered both an opportunity for the population to forget about the worries of the war, as well as an international stage for the Swiss government to represent its political values. Switzerland's sporting relations with France were also characterized by this combination of continuities and traditions in sport with diplomacy and geopolitics. In this case, however, due to the sensitive political and military context, diplomacy was given priority.

#### *Matches between Switzerland and France: Diplomacy in the stands*

In contrast to Italy, whose practically entirely unsuccessful campaign against France was over after just a few days, the French government surrendered in the face of the German troops' superiority in June 1940. The country was divided into two zones – the North and West, occupied by German troops, and the South, governed by the 'Vichy regime', which collaborated with Germany.<sup>47</sup> This significantly affected French football. It was aggravated by the fact that the Vichy regime's commissioners for education and sport, Jean Borotra and, later, Colonel Joseph Pascot, who replaced Borotra in 1942, fought against professionalism with numerous decrees and generally failed to support the sport. Football was not compatible with the policies of the regime.<sup>48</sup>

46 Swiss Federal Archive, E 2001 D, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, note from the department to the ASFA, 17 April 1940: 'the committee of the Swiss Football Association is very aware that it is not possible to play against a German team without also playing against a French team, and vice versa'.

47 Cf. AZÉMA AND BÉDARIDA, *Le régime de Vichy*.

48 Cf. GAY-LESCOT, *Sport et éducation sous Vichy*; HARE, *Football in France*, 22–25.

[...] les nouveaux dirigeants reprenaient le mythe entretenu par les opposants au professionnalisme dans les années trente: celui du sportif ,raté‘ dont le seul souci était l'appât du gain. Jugé comme décadent et immoral, le métier de footballeurs professionnel était incompatible avec le nouvel ordre moral imaginé par le Régime de Vichy.<sup>49</sup>

As the Vichy government pursued an anti-modernist politics of 'blood and soil', football – as a child of the industrial age – was difficult to reconcile with the doctrine of the new regime. Borotra banned the game between June and September and planned a reorganization of the sport as part of an omni-sports association. Colonel Pascot continued to put into place his predecessor's ideas. As stated in the magazine *L'Auto* in June 1942, he wished 'le relèvement moral et social des joueurs professionnels'.<sup>50</sup> Although football was not supported by the government, this did not damage its popularity. Officials of the Football Association, as well as numerous clubs and players were unhappy about the re-amateurization of the sport.<sup>51</sup>

Apart from two matches against Switzerland and Spain in March 1942, the French national team did not play any further games between January 1940 and December 1944.<sup>52</sup> The match against Switzerland took place in Marseille and was attended by Jean Borotra. The large crowds that had come to watch the match displayed, according to *La Gazette de Lausanne*, 'ses sentiments envers l'Helvétie bienfaisante'.<sup>53</sup>

Can this expression of sympathy be understood as a demonstration of continuity by a country with which the willingness to maintain good neighbourly relations were associated during the interwar period? Switzerland often found itself in the position of 'David' against 'Goliath'

49 BREUIL, *Vichy et le football*, 54: 'The new leaders adopt the myth that was used by the opponents of professionalism in the 1930s: Athletes are losers whose only goal is the pursuit of money. Professional football was condemned as immoral and decadent, and as incompatible with the new moral code of the Vichy regime.'

50 *L'Auto*, 5 June 1942: 'a moral and social recovery of the professional players'.

51 WAHL AND LANFRANCHI, *Les footballeurs professionnels*.

52 DELAUNAY, RYSWICK AND CORNU, *100 ans de football en France*, 168; CAZAL, CAZAL AND OREGGIA, *L'équipe de France de football*, 74 f.

53 *Gazette de Lausanne*, 7 March 1942: 'his feelings for charitable Switzerland'.

and in these situations used its image as a 'pacifist' nation; the country was attested courage and fighting spirit even when suffering defeat. Already during a match between the 'France libre' team and the Swiss B-team in Lyon in the autumn of 1941, the head of the ASFA delegation had emphasized the sympathy that had been expressed towards the Swiss representatives:

[...] nombre de français ont tenu [à] manifester à nos joueurs leur reconnaissance pour ce que notre pays a fait jusqu'à maintenant en faveur des victimes de la guerre, victimes militaires et victimes civiles.<sup>54</sup>

As is so often the case, diplomatic statements were complemented by aspects of domestic policy:

[...] joueurs et dirigeants suisses sont rentrés au pays touchés de toutes les marques de gratitude dont ils avaient été entourés et qu'ils comprennent mieux encore que par le passé la tâche humanitaire qui incombe à leur patrie dans les temps difficiles que traverse le monde.<sup>55</sup>

This aspect was also evident during a different game, again a match between the Swiss B-team and a France libre team, which had been scheduled to take place on 27 May 1942 in Lausanne. Even though it was not an official international match, there was extensive coverage in the press, which highlighted the importance of such meetings:

En temps normal, une rencontre internationale revêt une grande importance; au point de vue sportif notamment. Dans les circonstances actuelles, elle en [a] une plus grande encore puisqu'elle donne l'occasion à des citoyens de pays amis de se rencontrer, en dépit des difficultés nombreuses, de fraterniser, d'évoquer le passé et

54 Swiss Federal Archive, E 2001 D, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, letter from the SFV to the Federal Department of Defence, 16 November 1941: '[...] many French have insisted on showing our players their gratitude for everything that our country has until now done for the victims of the war, the military and the civilian victims'.

55 IBID.: 'Players and officials from Switzerland are touched by all the gestures of gratitude that they have received, and now even better understand the humanitarian duty that our country has in these difficult times across the world.'

d'ébaucher des projets. Réunion bienvenue et bien faite pour témoigner des sentiments cordiaux animant deux peuples.<sup>56</sup>

An article about the match published in *Le Sport Suisse* also emphasized this point:

[...] après avoir assisté à toutes les réceptions auxquelles nous fûmes conviés, on peut se demander si c'est à une joute sportive ou simplement à une manifestation d'amitié franco-suisse que nous fûmes invités. De part et d'autres, on s'efforça – au point même de s'effacer devant le partenaire – de se faire aucune peine, même légère. Considérée déjà sous ce seul angle, cette rencontre a pleinement tenu ses promesses [...] pour la reprise des relations internationales Lausanne ne pouvait souhaiter avoir hôtes plus sympathiques que les français: c'est que des orateurs éminents comme M. le préfet Blanc ou M. le président du Conseil communal, M. Cordey, se plurent à souligner.<sup>57</sup>

At the end of the article, the author reminded his readers of the long tradition of football matches between the two countries, which offered a good opportunity to maintain political relations:

Le dernier épisode de cette inoubliable journée eut lieu au Modern City, où un excellent souper fut servi. Tour à tour, MM. Krebs, Rimet et Cordey célébrèrent en termes élevés, souvent émouvants, l'inaltérable amitié franco suisse.<sup>58</sup>

- 56 Gazette de Lausanne, 25 May 1942: 'In normal times, it is very important to play international games, from a sporting perspective. In the current circumstances, it has become even more important, as it offers the possibility of meeting citizens from friendly countries, despite all the difficulties, to maintain brotherly relations and to remember the past and plan for the future. A successful and highly valued meeting to show the cordial feelings that inspire both peoples.'
- 57 *Le Sport suisse*, 3 June 1942: 'After all the receptions to which we were invited the question arises whether these meetings are about sport or simply a sign of the friendship between France and Switzerland. Both sides made the effort not to offend anyone too much. Only from this perspective is the game a success [...] For the resumption of international relations, Lausanne could not have asked for better guests than the sympathetic French. This was emphasized many times by the mayor, Mr Blanc, and the municipal council president, Mr Cordey.'
- 58 *IBID.*: 'The final episode of this unforgettable day took place in Modern City, where an excellent dinner was served. One after the other, Krebs, Rimet and Cordey



This statement placed more emphasis on the joy of a reunion with the French neighbours than on the match itself. By contrast, the media coverage of the match against Italy had given more weight to sporting continuities, while it had highlighted diplomatic relations between the two countries when the Swiss B-team played France libre.

Although conflicts intensified in the course of the war, a journalist of the *Gazette de Lausanne* noted on the occasion of the match against France that a Swedish newspaper had requested a match between Sweden and Switzerland.<sup>59</sup> As the number of international matches decreased, the Swiss national team had to look for new opponents. In contrast to customary games against neighbours such as Germany, France, Italy or Hungary, and in view of the geopolitical tensions, the comments about these matches convey a sense of nostalgia.<sup>60</sup>

## Conclusion: A Football Tradition?

Even though the match on 21 April 1940 was not officially recognized, *Le Sport Suisse* nonetheless reported on it as though it were a genuine international game. However, as is the case with the game against France libre, the match cannot be found in the official statistics of Swiss football, nor in the 'Golden Book' or the historical part of the Swiss Football Association's website.

The FIFA policy towards Croatia was unclear at the time, which in part was probably also due to the young country's status.<sup>61</sup> In a letter to secretary Ivo Schricker, FIFA vice president Rodolphe Seeldrayers insisted that in regard to Croatia's membership of the global association 'il faut suivre

---

enthusiastically and emotionally praised the unwavering friendship between France and Switzerland.'

59 *Gazette de Lausanne*, 25 May 1942.

60 *Le Sport suisse*, 12 May 1943.

61 Cf. MAGAS, *Croatia Through History*.

dans cette affaire la procédure qui a été employée vis à vis de la Bohême et Moravie'.<sup>62</sup> A few weeks later, on 15 July 1941, Schricker confirmed this position in answer to a question.<sup>63</sup> After the war, however, the association's members declared themselves against Croatia's membership, as can be seen in a letter from Seeldrayers to Schricker on 21 December 1945: 'tout ce qui m'intéresse c'est de savoir si l'Allemagne avait déjà envahi la Yougoslavie au moment où nous avons admis la Croatie'.<sup>64</sup> In other correspondence, Seeldrayers voiced concern about the criticism that he had received because of the way in which he had handled Croatia's membership during the war.<sup>65</sup>

Two days after a match in Hungary, the Swiss national team had to accept a bitter 4–0 defeat against Croatia in Bern on 21 April 1940. However, this game did not receive a positive response in the press. Emil Birnbaum thus wrote:

[...] c'était presque un péché de sacrifier, pour un match de football, ce dimanche après-midi [...] Pourtant, il y a toujours, en Suisse, quelque quinze mille gaillards – dont nous sommes – qui se croient perdus si un match se joue sans eux [...] Mais, vaut-il vraiment la peine de se déplacer pour des balkaniques, pour ces sacrés croates qui nous obligent à regarder sur la carte pour voir de quel trou ils sortent. En somme, les croates sont des yougoslaves qui ont profité de la panique européenne pour envoyer promener les serbes et devenir autonomes, en politique et en ... football. C'est ainsi que varient les adversaires de notre équipe nationale.<sup>66</sup>

62 FIFA archive, correspondence Seeldrayers, letter to Ivo Schricker, 14 May 1941: 'the same procedure [must] be used as in the case of Bohemia and Moravia'.

63 FIFA archive, correspondence Seeldrayer, letter from Ivo Schricker, 15 July 1941.

64 FIFA archive, correspondence Seeldrayers, letter to Ivo Schricker, 6 December 1945: 'all I want to know is whether Germany had already attacked Yugoslavia when we accepted Croatia'.

65 *IBID.*

66 *Le Sport suisse*, 24 April 1940: 'It was almost a sin to sacrifice this Sunday afternoon for a football match. However, in Switzerland there are still 15,000 guys who feel lost when a match is played without them – we are also part of it [...] But is it really worth travelling to a match against people from the Balkans, to these Croatians, where you have to look on a map to find out which hole they come from. Essentially, Croatians are Yugoslavs who used the European panic to send away the Serbs and to become autonomous, in politics and in... football. In this way, the opponents of our national team change.'

Apart from the geopolitical situation, which had led Switzerland to play against this opponent, and in stark contrast to the comments about games against countries such as France, the article conveys a certain sense of nostalgia concerning the long-standing matches against other teams:

Finis [...] les matchs avec l'Autriche, la Tchécoslovaquie, la Pologne, la Norvège, le Danemark, petits poucets avalés tout crus par l'ogre. Mais voici venir les pays nouveaux-nés, engendrés par la peur le désarroi: Slovaquie, Croatie.<sup>67</sup>

Compared to all the other international matches examined above, the response to the Croatia game was much less cordial. Croatia's special status may at least in part explain the politicians' indifference to the country, but it could be argued that the fact that the two countries did not have a long history in terms of sport also played an important role.

A few years ago, Paul Dietschy wrote the following about football during the Second World War:

[...] la relative plasticité du sport et du football donnait aux rencontres internationales des significations dont l'interprétation pouvait varier: de l'affrontement symbolique des peuples à leur rapprochement, en passant par la revanche sur les années d'occupation, une large gamme de sentiments et d'interprétations pouvait être mobilisées.<sup>68</sup>

The analyses presented here illustrate the ways in which football reacted to different challenges, and how it dealt with these challenges on both a sports and political level. It would be interesting to explore the sporting traditions that developed during the interwar period more closely, and to explain why certain opponents were chosen. Switzerland appears to have occupied a special

67 *IBID.*: 'No more games against Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Norway, Denmark, dwarfs that have been devoured by the giant. But now there are new countries: Slovakia, Croatia.'

68 *DIETSCHY, Football et Guerre totale*, 173: 'The relative plasticity of sport and football gave the international matches meanings which could be interpreted in different ways: from the symbolic confrontation of the peoples to their rapprochement, or revenge for the years of occupation, a large variety of feelings and interpretations can be mobilized.'

position in this respect, as it was the first country to attempt to revive previous football relations with Germany not only after the Second World War,<sup>69</sup> but also after the First World War,<sup>70</sup> even though Germany had not yet rejoined FIFA at that point. Thus, this study confirms recent papers that propose to focus more precisely on the important role played by Switzerland in the development of European football during the first part of the last century.<sup>71</sup>

## Bibliography

- ANDERSON, BENEDICT: *L'Imaginaire national. Réflexions sur l'origine et l'essor du nationalisme*, Paris 1996.
- ATTALI, MICKAËL (ed.): *Sports et médias, XIX<sup>e</sup>–XX<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Biarritz 2010.
- AZÉMA, JEAN-PIERRE, AND BÉDARIDA, FRANÇOIS (eds): *Le régime de Vichy et les Français*, Paris 1992.
- BECK, PETER J.: *Scoring for Britains. International Football and International Politics, 1900–1939*, London, 1999.
- BERTHOUD, JÉRÔME, QUIN, GRÉGORY, AND VONNARD, PHILIPPE: *Le football suisse. Des pionniers aux professionnels*, Lausanne, 2016.
- BONDE, HANS: *Football with the Foe. Sport. Danish Sport under the Swastika*, Odense, 2008.
- BOURGOIS, DANIEL: *La représentation des intérêts étrangers de Vichy par la Suisse à l'ombre de l'occupation et de la France Libre*, in: *Relations internationales* 144 (2010), no. 4, 21–35.
- BRÄNDLE, FABIAN, AND KOLLER, CHRISTIAN: *4 zu 2. Die Goldene Zeit des Schweizer Fussballs 1918–1939*, Göttingen 2014.
- BREUIL, XAVIER, *Vichy et le football*, in: DIETSCHY, VIVIER, LOUDCHER AND RENAUD, *Sport et idéologie*, 53–61.

69 WAHLIG, *Ein Tor zur Welt?*, 30–III; DICHTER, *Kicking Around International Sport*.

70 KOLLER, *Das Boykottspiel*.

71 First reflections have been developed at the end of the 1990s by Pierre Lanfranchi. Cf. LANFRANCHI, *Football et modernité*. For recent studies, Cf. QUIN AND VONNARD, *Switzerland: a Stronghold in the European football*, KOLLER, *Sport transfer over the channel*.

- CANTE, DIEGO: Propaganda und Fußball. Sport und Politik in den Begegnungen zwischen den italienischen 'Azzuri' und den 'Weißen' aus Wien in der Zwischenkriegszeit, in: *Zeitgeschichte* 26 (1999), no. 3, 184–202.
- CARPENTIER, FLORENCE (ed.): *Le sport est-il éducatif?*, Rouen 2004.
- CARTER, NEIL: 'Managing the Media'. The Changing Relationship Between Football Managers and the Media, in: *Sport in History* 27 (2007), no. 2, 217–240.
- CAZAL, JEAN-MICHEL, CAZAL, PIERRE, AND OREGGIA, MICHEL: *L'équipe de France de football. L'intégrale des 497 rencontres (1904–1991)*, Paris 1992.
- CHISARI, FABIO: 'Une organisation parfaite': la Coupe du monde de football de 1934 selon la presse européenne, in: GASTAUD AND MOURLANE, *Le football dans nos sociétés*, 174–189.
- CRETIAZ, BERNARD, JOST, HANS-ULRICH, AND PITHON, RÉMY (eds): *Peuples inanimés, avez-vous donc une âme? Images et identités suisses au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Lausanne 1987.
- DELAUNAY, PIERRE, RYSWICK, JACQUES DE, AND CORNU, JEAN: *100 ans de football en France*, Paris 1982.
- DICHTER, HEATHER: Kicking Around International Sport. West Germany's Return to the International Community Through Football, in: *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 30 (2013), no. 17, 2031–2051.
- DIETSCHY, PAUL: 'Pugni, bastoni e rivoltelle'. Violences et football dans l'Italie des années vingt et trente. *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome*, in: *Italie et Méditerranée* 108 (1996), 203–240.
- : 1918–1920, des tranchées aux stades. Quelques éclairages sur la sortie de guerre des sportifs français et des fédérations de football européennes, in: *Histoire@politique. Politique, culture, société* 3 (2007), <<http://www.histoire-politique.fr>>.
- : De l'ardistisme sportif' à la fabrique du consensus: les ambivalences de la presse sportive italienne sous le fascisme, in: *Le Temps des médias* 9 (2007), no. 2, 63–78.
- : Sport, éducation physique et fascisme sous le regard de l'historien, in: *Revue d'Histoire Moderne et Contemporaine* 55 (2008), no. 3, 61–84.
- : Football et Guerre totale: le cas de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, in: GASTAUD AND MOURLANE, *Le football dans nos sociétés*, 159–173.
- : French Sport: Caught between Universalism and Exceptionalism, in: *European Review* 19 (2011), no. 4, 509–525.
- : Guerre et football professionnel: le cas de l'Italie et de Turin (1940–1943), in: REY, *Football en Méditerranée occidentale*, 15–34.
- : *Histoire du football*, Paris 2014.
- , VIVIER, CHRISTIAN, LOUDCHER, JEAN-FRANÇOIS, AND RENAUD, JEAN-NICOLAS (eds): *Sport et idéologie. VII<sup>e</sup> Congrès International du Comité Européen de l'Histoire du Sport*, Besançon 2004.

- EGGERS, ERIK: Profifußball im Amateurverband. Der deutsche Sonderweg, in: KOLLER AND BRÄNDLE, *Fußball zwischen den Kriegen*, 221–243.
- EISENBERG, CHRISTIANE, LANFRANCHI, PIERRE, MASON, TONY, AND WAHL, ALFRED: *100 years of football: the FIFA centennial book*, London 2004.
- GASTAUD, YVAN, AND MOURLANE, STÉPHANE (eds): *Le football dans nos sociétés. Une culture populaire. 1914–1998*, Paris 2006.
- GAY-LESCOT, JEAN-LOUIS: *Sport et éducation sous Vichy (1940–1944)*, Lyon 1991.
- GRÜN, LAURENT: Le débat amateurisme/professionnalisme du football français, ou la négation d'une partition sport purifié/sport dévoyé (1890–1939), in: CARPENTIER, *Le sport est-il éducatif?*, 125–135.
- GUGGISBERG, PHILIPPE (ed.): *75 ans de Ligue nationale ASF*, Bern 2009.
- HAFER, ANDREAS, AND HAFER, WOLFGANG: *Hugo Meisl, oder die Erfindung des modernen Fußballs. Eine Biografie*, Göttingen 2007.
- HARE, GEOFF: *Football in France. A Cultural History*, Oxford/New York 2003.
- HAVEMANN, NILS: *Fußball unterm Hakenkreuz. Der DFB zwischen Sport, Politik und Kommerz*, Frankfurt am Main/New York 2005.
- : *Geld und Ideologie im Fußballsport der Weimarer Republik*, in: *Sportwissenschaft. The German Journal of Sports Science* 36 (2006), 75–84.
- : *Samstags um halb 4. Die Geschichte der Fußballbundesliga*, München 2013.
- HAYNES, RICHARD: 'Lobby' and the Formative Years of Radio Sport Commentary, 1935–1952, in: *Sport in History* 29 (2009), no. 1, 25–48.
- HERZOG, MARKWART: German *Blitzkrieg* Football Against the English 'Wall Tactic'. The Football System Dispute in the German Empire 1939–1941, in: *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 31 (2014), no. 12, 1489–1508.
- HUGHES, GERALD R., AND OWEN, RACHEL J.: 'The Continuation of Politics by Other Means'. Britain, the Two Germanys and the Olympic Games, 1949–1972, in: *Contemporary European History* 18 (2009), no. 4, 443–474.
- IMPIGLIA, MARCO: *Fußball in Italien in der Zwischenkriegszeit*, in: KOLLER AND BRÄNDLE, *Fußball zwischen den Kriegen*, 145–182.
- ISOLA, GIANNI: Les hérauts du foot: l'invention du reportage sportif à la radio italienne, in: *Société & Représentations* (1998), no. 7, 295–307.
- JOST, HANS-ULRICH: *Politique culturelle de la Confédération et valeurs nationales*, in: CRETTAZ, JOST AND PITHON, *Peuples inanimés*, 19–38.
- KOLLER, CHRISTIAN, AND BRÄNDLE, FABIAN (eds): *Fußball zwischen den Kriegen*, Berlin 2010.
- KOLLER, CHRISTIAN: Sport transfer over the channel: elitist migration and the advent of football and ice hockey in Switzerland, in: *Sport in Society* 20 (2017) no 10, 1390–1404.

- LANFRANCHI, PIERRE: Bologna: 'The team that shook the world', in: *The International Journal of The History of Sport* 8 (1991), no. 3, 336–346.
- : Football et modernité. La Suisse et la pénétration du football sur le continent, in: *Traverse* 3 (1998), 76–87.
- : La consommation du spectacle sportif. Une comparaison entre l'Allemagne, l'Italie et la France dans l'entre-deux-guerres, in: *Le Mouvement Social* 206 (2004), 115–125.
- : La Première Guerre mondiale et le développement du football italien en Europe: l'exemple italien, in: GASTAUD AND MOURLANE, *Le football dans nos sociétés*, 136–145.
- MAGAS, BRANKA: *Croatia Through History. The Making of a European State*, London 2007.
- MAICON, BENOÎT: The politicization of football: the European game and the approach to the Second World War, in: *Soccer and Society* 9 (2008), no. 4, 532–550.
- MARSCHIK, MATTHIAS: Mitteleuropa: politische Konzepte – sportliche Praxis, in: *Historical Social Research* 31 (2006), no. 1, 88–108.
- MARTIN, SIMON: *Football and fascism: the national game under Mussolini*, London 2004.
- MILZA, PIERRE: Le football italien. Une histoire à l'échelle du siècle, in: *Vingtième siècle* 26 (1990), no. 26, 49–58.
- MOOSER, JOSEF: Die 'Geistige Landesverteidigung' in den 1930er Jahren. Profile und Kontexte eines vielschichtigen Phänomens der schweizerischen politischen Kultur in der Zwischenkriegszeit, in: *Revue Suisse d'Histoire* 47 (1997), 685–708.
- QUIN, GRÉGORY: La Coupe de l'Europe Centrale (1927–1938), une compétition internationale oubliée?, in: *Stadion. Revue Internationale d'Histoire du Sport* 37 (2013), no. 2, 285–304.
- : La Suisse face à la Grande Allemagne (1933–1942). Éléments pour une histoire du football helvétique, in: ATTALI, *Sports et médias*, 761–770.
- , AND VONNARD, PHILIPPE: 'Par delà le Gothard'. Les matches internationaux Italie-Suisse et la consolidation des champs footballistiques italien et suisse dans l'entre-deux-guerres, in: *Diacronie. Studi di Storia Contemporanea*, 2011, no. 5, <<http://www.studistorici.com>>.
- , AND –: Switzerland, a Stronghold in the European Football (1930–1960), in: *Sport in History* 35 (2015), no 4, 531–549.
- REY, DIDIER (ed.): *Football en Méditerranée occidentale 1900–1975*, Ajaccio 2010.
- RUOFF, PAUL: *Le livre d'or du football suisse*, Basel 1953.
- SCHNEIDER, JOHANNES: 'Un moyen précieux de maintenir de bonnes liaisons'. La Suisse, puissance protectrice de l'Italie au cours d'une décennie tourmentée (1940–1949), in: *Relations internationales* 144 (2010), no. 4, 37–49.

- VONNARD, PHILIPPE, AND QUIN, GRÉGORY: *Éléments pour une histoire du professionnalisme dans le football Suisse durant l'entre-deux-guerres: processus et résistances*, in: *Revue Suisse d'Histoire* 62 (2012), no. 1, 70–85.
- WAHL, ALFRED: *Le footballeur français: de l'amateurisme au salariat (1890–1926)*, in: *Le Mouvement social* 135 (1986), 7–30.
- : *Un professionnalisme de résignation en France*, in: *Sociétés et représentations* 8 (1998), 67–75.
- , AND LANFRANCHI, PIERRE: *Les footballeurs professionnels des années 1930 à nos jours*, Paris 1995.
- WEBER, EUGEN: *La France des années 30. Tourments et perplexités*, Paris 1994.
- WAHLIG, HENRY: *Ein Tor zur Welt? Der deutsche Fußball und die FIFA, 1945–1950*, Göttingen 2008.

### *Archives*

- FIFA Archiv.  
 – correspondance Schricker.  
 – correspondance Rimet.  
 Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv, E 2001 D.  
 Schweizerischer Fußball-Verband.

### *Periodicals*

- L'Auto.  
 Football.  
 Football association.  
 Gazette de Lausanne.  
 Journal de Genève.  
 Le Journal de Genève.  
 Sport Tagblatt.  
 Le Sport suisse.