Barbara Keys’ marvelously incisive, multifaceted analysis of the internationalization of sport during the 1930s is a seminal contribution to the fields of international relations, diplomatic history, cultural history and sport history. Through her thorough research in English, Russian, and German archival sources, Keys has excavated some invaluable new insights and in so doing, has directed our attention to neglected avenues of historical enquiry. In particular, the book is a model for future cross-cultural, transnational studies. As such, I would rank Globalizing Sport amongst the finest books dealing with sport history in recent years (it was awarded the North American Society for Sport History’s 2006 book prize).

Although I am knowledgeable of some of the literature in diplomatic history and international relations, I will leave the evaluation of the book’s significance to scholars working in those fields. Further, given the space constraints, I will forgo a summary of the book’s main arguments, and will, instead, consider Keys’ contributions to sport historiography.

Keys provides a savvy overview of some established events, themes and processes within sport studies. Her discussion of sport’s place within modern international politics — particularly the ways in which sporting practices are key carriers of nationalism as well as useful tools of the state — will be fairly well-known to specialists in the field. Her cogent overview of Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) is well-known.
territory for Europeans or Latin Americans (for whom soccer is the dominant sport); similarly, the book’s treatment of the rise of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has been thoroughly investigated by scholars from around the world.

Despite well-crafted chapters on the American contribution to international sport (especially the gem of a chapter entitled “Democracy and International Sport: The United States”), the contours of this history during the early decades of the twentieth-century—including the Americanizing of the Olympics—has attracted the scrutiny of numerous fine historians, most notably the work of Mark Dyreson. Nevertheless, Keys demonstrates convincingly how Americans sought to “mold international sport into forms consonant with the values and ideals of U.S.-style capitalism and democracy.” Americans were convinced that “the popularization of sport was an effective means of spreading their own values and ideas, and they framed their participation in international sport as a moral crusade to spread peace and democracy” (p. 5). This effort was not led by the state (as in Germany and USSR), but rather, by private groups that exploited sport to promote diplomatic relations with countries in Europe, Asia, and South America. Although Americans had only limited success in exporting their dominant team sports abroad, they did exert a profound influence on international sport by expanding its connections to the worlds of entertainment and mass culture. Moreover, at home, according to Keys, “U.S. sports victories helped affirm beliefs in the country’s benevolent role in the word and in the superiority of democracy as a political and social system” (pp. 5, 7, 15) — notions central to an American imperial identity within the realm of sport (but unfortunately neglected in leading survey texts on the history of American sport).

In my view, the book's most incisive ‘findings’ are to be found in Keys’ analysis of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. There has been no shortage of attention to the ways in which the Nazis ‘exploited’ the 1936 Olympics for political capital. This, like the broader history of Nazism, is one of the most popular stories in popular (and sport) history. According to the dean of sport history, Allen Guttmann, the Nazis and Soviets — unlike their liberal-democratic counterparts who allegedly “remained indifferent to the success or failure of their athletes in international competition” — embraced “instrumentalized sports” whereby these authoritarian regimes “demonstrated national revitalization and to

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2 See chapter three, *passim.*

3 For an extended treatment of this issue, see S. W. Pope, “Rethinking Sport, Empire and American Exceptionalism,” *Sport History Review* 38 (2007), 91-119. For examples of how these issues have received short shrift within key survey texts, see, for example, B. Rader, *American Sports: From the Age of Folk Games to the Era of Televised Sports* (New York, 2004, fifth ed.); and E. Gorn and W. Goldstein, *A Brief History of American Sports* (Urbana, 2004, second ed.).
symbolize ideological superiority . . . [and] subordinated individual athletes to the state."\(^4\)

In my opinion, this view that liberal-democratic nations held a benign, if not passive view of Olympic competition in stark contrast to the Nazis and Soviets (which merely adopted international sport to manipulate global public opinion) requires both empirical and ideological special pleading.

The Nazis’ and Soviets’ relationship with the international sport system was not as one-sided as popularly imagined. The dominant view that the Nazis callously “played politics” in hosting the 1936 Games ignores both the way in which spectator sport represented contested terrain within Germany prior to the 1930s, as well as the ways in which elite sport both supported and subverted Nazi ideology. In her deft overview of the history of modern sport in Germany prior to the emergence of the Nazi regime, Keys documents the longer tradition of suspicion and resistance to competitive sport (and the widespread support for the indigenous Turnen gymnastic tradition as well as the legacy of workers’ sport).

In a similar fashion, the Soviet regime promoted “proletarian” sport during the 1920s for the sake of mass health, hygiene and physical preparedness, but increasing gravitated toward global sport (in spite of its distrust of its deep distrust of Western culture) and thereby developed a professionalized spectator sports culture. By the early 1930s, the Soviets dropped their opposition to “bourgeois” sport and integrated with the very Western-dominated sport system that had been previously denounced. In the end, as Keys argues, “proletarian fizkultura lost to capitalist soccer.” (p. 158)

In sum (and to make a long, complicated story short) the growth of competitive, international sport, according to Keys, effectively overcame the ingrained hostilities toward cultural internationalism in Nazi Germany and the USSR. Both ultimately turned their attention to global, competitive sport and in so doing, were effectively co-opted in the process. Not only did the international sport system impose constraints on the expression of racist ideology, but both regimes were effectively forced to “play by the rules” in the process.\(^5\)

Beyond such revisionist, interpretive contributions to sport historiography, Keys calls for greater cross-fertilization between scholars of diplomacy and international relations (who have devoted little attention to sport) and sport historians (who rarely engage with the literature on foreign policy) to situate their subject within the context of international politics.\(^6\) The study of sport, she maintains, “has implications for how we conceive of the


\(^5\) R. Mandell’s *The Nazi Olympics* (Urbana, 1987), despite being hailed as a classic work based upon extensive research in German documents, misses completely this crucial whole point of how Nazi sport was transformed by its participation in the international sport system.

\(^6\) A promising, recent example in this vein is G. Gems, *Athletic Crusade: Sport and American Cultural Imperialism* (Lincoln, 2006).
role of non-state actors, cultural transfer, perceptions, mega-events in the construction of a world community, ideologies of race and gender, and the incorporation of the developing world into the international system” (pp. 10-11)—all of which have much in common with the new subjects of international history.  

Similarly, the transnational elements of modern sport deserve more detailed, comparative analysis with other international institutions and structures. To date, the most ambitious effort to grapple with such issues within sport historiography is a 1995 article written by John Hoberman. His concept of “idealistic internationalisms” was based upon comparisons of the Red Cross, the Boy Scout movement, Esperanto movement, and the Wagnerian and Olympic movements. These movements maintained a “core repertory of behaviors and orientations” that made them “cohere as a distinct category of thematically interrelated organizations.” In addition to ideological opposition to Marxist internationalism, the principal values of these movements included gender segregation, “a rhetoric of universal membership,” “an insistence on political neutrality,” “aristocratic affiliations,” “a professed interest in peacemaking or pacifism,” “the use of visual symbols such as flags and anthems,” “anxieties about war,” and a code of chivalry and a shared enthusiasm for a masculinity inspired by physical and outdoor pursuits explained the “willingness” of many idealistic internationalisms (e.g. IOC) to do “cultural business” with the Nazis during the age of fascism. This is precisely the kind of comparative analysis that Keys suggests (and, of course, she cites Hoberman’s essay in her book).

The discussion about how American historians might move beyond an exclusively nation-centered, American exceptionalist perspective has advanced in recent years toward a consideration of transnationality and the need of better situating American history within world history. Thomas Bender, one of the leading figures in this vanguard, argues that historians must integrate the stories of the American past with other “larger stories from which, [and] with a kind of continental self sufficiency, the United States has isolated itself. . . We must understand every dimension of American life as entangled in other histories [and that] other histories are implicated in American history, and the United States is implicated in . . . similar projects in other countries.”

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7 This gap in the scholarly literature will be broached and addressed in The Routledge Companion to Sports History, edited by S. W. Pope and J. R. Nauright (forthcoming, 2009). The book—the first ever attempt to document the global development of sport historiography—will feature the contributions of fifty distinguished scholars from around the world addressing such topics as politics, diplomacy, diffusion of sport, globalization, and imperialism.


9 For an update of this literature, see “The Nation and Beyond” special issue of the Journal of American History 86 (December 1999), in particular, D. Thelen, “The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History,” pp. 965-78.

10 T. Bender, “Historians, the Nation, and the Plentitude of Narratives,” in Bender, ed., Rethinking American History in a Global Age (Berkeley, 2002), 3.
Barbara Keys has attempted such an analysis. She has situated her work within the wider debates about the international diffusion and globalization of sport as well as within the historiography on comparative and transnational approaches which push us beyond the insularity of the nation state in our analysis of sport and diplomacy. As she writes, the “relationship between transnational influences, globalizing processes, and foreign cultural products, on the one hand, and countervailing pressures to assert national, local, and particularist identities, on the other, is one of the central questions of our era.” (p. 9) As such, this well-crafted book deserves a careful, critical reception within a wide range of scholarly fields and discourses.