



## Building Europe with the Ball

Turning Points in the  
Europeanization of Football,  
1905–1995

Philippe Vonnard, Grégory Quin  
and Nicolas Bancel (eds)

Peter Lang

GRÉGORY QUIN

## 2 Central Europe Rules European Football: The 'Golden Age' of Regional Connections in European Football (1926–1938)<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

During the interwar period, as a consequence of the spread of modern sports from England to the rest of the world, football experienced an unprecedented development and saw the influences weighing on it begin to multiply in the context of the progressive professionalization of the sport, both on the field and in its administration. Controlled by an international institution (the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), founded in 1904), football took on diplomatic and political aspects,<sup>2</sup> acquired an economic dimension,<sup>3</sup> and reached into every social class across Europe, although the processes involved differed from one country to another.<sup>4</sup> Along with this, and beyond the dynamics of the sport's democratization, a process of exacerbation of sporting nationalisms began to develop around football, offering increasing possibilities for the masses to identify with the sporting 'values' and 'performances' of each country<sup>5</sup> – a process nurtured by the advent of more regular international competitions, pitting not just clubs but nations against each other on an increasingly more regular calendar.

Thus, the intention of this chapter is to analyse together the creation of two international competitions, and assess the influence of the development of 'regional' football in Europe on the internationalization of the sport. In other words, this study of two competitions that were key factors in the development of European football in the 1920s and 1930s has a dual objective: to illuminate the history of a relatively unknown international

competition in Central Europe (the International Cup) and to analyse the concurrence that existed with the World Cup. At this period, both the Olympic Games (1920, 1924, 1928 and 1936) and Football World Cup (1930, 1934 and 1938), testify to the existence of structured international relationships. Nevertheless – and beyond the contradictions exhibited in the organization of the Olympic tournament, especially regarding the ‘status’ of the players<sup>6</sup> – these were not the only competitions being played in Europe, as a number of regional competitions were also organized: in Scandinavia, in the Balkans, along the Danube and around the Baltic.<sup>7</sup> Based on some ‘regional’ dynamics, those different groups are not recognized outside football. On the one hand, some competitions concerned a widely recognized geographic area (Scandinavia), but on the other, some regions were genuine football creations and challenged some aspects of the political order of their time; for example ‘Central European’ competitions also included Italy and Switzerland.

Thus, the interwar period was a key moment in the history of football for the development of the sport’s administration, and for the emergence of an elite group forming a network responsible for its management and expansion.<sup>8</sup> During these years trainers were recruited by the federations,<sup>9</sup> and FIFA acquired a Secretary General – Ivo Schricker<sup>10</sup> – to tighten-up the erratic management of his predecessor, Secretary Hirschman and to handle the increased workload now weighing on FIFA. In addition, the increasing frequency of international matches offered the football elite more regular opportunities to rub shoulders, especially in the context of a ‘Central Europe’<sup>11</sup> that has too often been ignored by sports historians of the interwar period.<sup>12</sup>

This study is based on a systematic evaluation of FIFA’s archives (Minutes of Congresses and Executive Committees, Reports by its Secretary, *Official Gazettes*, national correspondence files, statutes, etc.), as well as an examination of the archives of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the Fédération Française de Football Association (FFFA), the Association Suisse de Football (ASF) and the Deutsche Fussball Bund (DFB). Those primary sources, mainly gathered during research supported by a UEFA (Union of European Football Associations) research grant,<sup>13</sup> have been cross-checked through an inventory of the commemorative

publications of the principal European national associations and a detailed study of the French, Swiss and Austrian press in the interwar period.

### From an idea to a competition

In 1905–6, immediately following the establishment of FIFA,<sup>14</sup> its leaders began to consider the creation of a competition that would bring together a number of representative national teams. As a result, after a first proposal from the Dutch leader Carl Hirschman (who was the Federation’s Secretary from 1906 to 1931) involving the champion clubs from the affiliated associations,<sup>15</sup> it was primarily FIFA’s Belgian delegate – Louis Mühlinghaus – who presented a ‘Proposal concerning the creation of an International Cup’<sup>16</sup> at the second FIFA Congress, held in Paris on 10–12 June 1905. Although the procedures seem to have been well thought out, especially as regards the preliminary matches (already employing geographic groups) and the financial issues, the inexperience of the institution and the problems of travel still limited the possibilities for carrying out such a project.

The Olympic tournaments of 1908 and 1912 were the first international football competitions ever held. Both contests were won by Great Britain. They were modest in scale,<sup>17</sup> but we can already discern the public’s increasing interest in football. There were a total of 14,000 spectators for the six matches played in London in 1908 and close to 70,000 (at eleven matches) in Stockholm in 1912.

After the First World War, some ‘regions’ or groups of countries were the first to launch competitions, in particular Scandinavia in 1924,<sup>18</sup> although these countries had been participating in the Northern Games since 1901 and, through this event, shaped a new regional identity.<sup>19</sup> The idea of a Nordic Cup, launched in 1919 by Louis Østrup, the President of the Danish Football Federation (DBU) and a Vice-President of FIFA from 1920, was accepted in 1923, when the Danish federation celebrated its thirty-fifth anniversary. Originally the competition included Denmark, Sweden

and Norway – Finland would join these teams for the second Nordic Cup in 1929 – in a championship format that extended over a five-year period.

The management of football in the postwar period was proving to be a complex matter,<sup>20</sup> but in the early 1920s the Austrian manager Hugo Meisl indicated that in his opinion it could be very profitable to develop international sporting relationships, specifically by means of a competition.<sup>21</sup> This could be an Olympic tournament like that in Antwerp in 1920, in which Czechoslovakia (newly constituted as a sovereign nation) was allowed to take part, but not yet Germany, which the 1919 FIFA Brussels Congress had decided to leave outside the fold of international football.<sup>22</sup>

### Central Europe as a pioneering region

After various proposals and announcements between 1920 and 1925, especially regarding the idea of organizing a competition among the Central European countries, the concept of an international competition was revived in a more concrete form during the 1926 FIFA Congress.<sup>23</sup> Austria, which had not attended the 1926 Congress, led the discussions at a meeting held in Prague at the beginning of November 1926,<sup>24</sup> with the idea that ‘four countries will be able to achieve it [creating an international competition]’.<sup>25</sup>

This meeting gathered all the Central European associations (Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia) as well as Italy, which was already interested in extending its influence. Jules Rimet has described the resolution agreed to on that occasion:

If at the moment no competition exists for non-amateurs and professionals. Considering that a number of countries strongly wish to have an international competition for publicity purposes and to raise the level of general interest; [the nations present] recommend the creation of an international competition for the best teams from each country (regardless of whether their players are amateurs, non-amateurs or professionals), to be called the ‘European Cup’.<sup>26</sup>

A few days later, on the occasion of a FIFA Executive Committee meeting, an ‘organizational committee’ (whose spokesman was Hugo Meisl) proposed a European Cup, to be played ‘between the best national teams, whether they consist of amateurs, professionals, or both’,<sup>27</sup> with apparently no restriction to Central Europe. In fact, two proposals were immediately submitted: one for clubs (meaning clubs from countries that had already introduced professionalism) and the other for national teams (open to all associations affiliated with FIFA). This approach was incorporated into Article 20 of FIFA’s statutes,<sup>28</sup> which states that:

(Art. 20.) The Federation reserves to itself the sole right to organize an international championship. The organization of international competitions is subject to authorization from the Federation. The Federation must be notified of international competitions.<sup>29</sup>

Although the Central European countries’ initial proposal included the possibility of participation by all associations affiliated with FIFA, Jules Rimet does not seem to have been taken in, considering these provisions to be ‘a very kind offer’, while emphasizing that ‘quite obviously, the promoters of the European Cup [intend] to limit this event to being an exclusively continental competition’.<sup>30</sup>

However, after much discussion during FIFA’s Executive Committee meeting on 10 December 1926, the committee asked the ‘Secretariat [...] to gather the opinions of the affiliated associations on the “desirability” of an international championship’<sup>31</sup> and an ad hoc commission was established, comprising Messrs Bonnet (Switzerland), Meisl (Austria), Delaunay (France), Ferretti (Italy) and Linnemann (Germany), so gathering people from within FIFA’s Executive Committee and some others not directly involved in the first decision-making circle.

This commission immediately scheduled its next meeting in Zurich, for early February 1927. Following these discussions and proposals, FIFA’s various member associations were then polled by means of a questionnaire drafted by Carl Hirschman, containing several questions about the opportunity to organize an international football competition.

The archives of the FIFA do not contain this questionnaire, nor the answers from the national associations, neither were the archive sites of

several national associations helpful. However, the approach was commented on in several newspapers across Europe. For instance, answers given by the Fédération Française de Football Association were published in *L'Auto*. About the creation of an international competition, the French institution answered: 'Yes, we certainly accept the idea, on the understanding that this acceptance is subject to the conclusions finally adopted by the International Study Commission.'<sup>32</sup> On the second question, regarding the concrete organization of the games, the FFFA suggested prudently that it should be:

[...] a championship limited to Europe; the countries would be classified into a certain number of geographic groups in order to limit the travel required [...]. Why restrict the International Championship to Europe? Because the FFFA thinks that one should begin at the beginning, and see how the system works in practice [...].<sup>33</sup>

Lastly, on the status of the players (and the teams), the FFFA replied that it recommended 'that the best national teams should be included, with no distinction made between professionals, amateurs, and non-amateurs'.<sup>34</sup>

For its part the Swiss journal *Le Sport Suisse*, in its 12 January 1927 issue, stated that the Association Suisse de Football had not yet reached a decision, but that 'the British would be against it'.<sup>35</sup> This anticipated British opposition was specifically linked to the issue of the players' status, and to the fact that the proposed competition could be 'a solution employed by countries [which had introduced professionalism] and found themselves unable to compete in the Olympic Tournament'.<sup>36</sup>

Faced with these hesitations, Hugo Meisl remained attached to 'his' proposed competition in Central Europe. He wanted to use football to bring together the Danubian countries for an international competition in the form of a championship of home-and-away matches, whereas Henri Delaunay seems to have been more convinced by the English model of a direct-elimination competition. As he never became a full FIFA member (he never joined the Executive Committee), Hugo Meisl could not force the organization to support his project, and so he made use of his personal relationships and the political dynamics of a 'new' Central Europe.<sup>37</sup>

## Central Europe dominates Europe

Beyond the hesitations connected to the issue of player status<sup>38</sup> and to international rivalries, it seems that the idea of an international competition had become generally accepted by the end of the 1920s, in the context of a Europe in which a certain geopolitical detente had been established, consecrated by the signature of the Kellogg-Briand Pact<sup>39</sup> – which outlawed war – by sixty-three states including Germany and the USSR, on 27 August 1928.

In a more peaceful political climate, and with the statistics testifying to the ever-increasing regularity of international matches,<sup>40</sup> at its February 1927 meeting in Zurich the FIFA committee made three proposals:

1. The first provided that FIFA would organize two competitions: a European competition every two years for representative national teams; and an intercontinental competition every four years. This proposal also provided for group operations at the continental level, where the European teams would be divided into groups of four to six teams – and where the European competition would be based on the points won in the home-and-away match series – with the winners then going on to represent the continent in the intercontinental competition.
2. The second proposal, similar on some of its points, no longer provided for qualifying 'groups', nor, consequently, for a separate 'championship' format where the points would be recorded over a fairly long period. Direct elimination was to be the rule, as in the English model, and represented the 'simplest solution'.
3. The third proposal envisaged the creation of two separate competitions, one for amateurs and the other for professionals.<sup>41</sup>

The final decision was to be made by the June 1927 FIFA Congress, in Helsingfors.<sup>42</sup> A few months after the Zurich meeting, the report it had produced was read out to all the delegates assembled in the Finnish Parliament. A discussion ensued between the representatives present in Finland. During this discussion, various points of view were expressed, which the head of

the Austrian federation, Dr Eberstaller, welcomed, knowing that some of the associations (including his own) were very interested in the organization of an international competition. After Chairman Rimet had pointed out that a plan for a competition (under the aegis of FIFA) already existed for 1930,<sup>43</sup> Hugo Meisl noted that the Central European associations had introduced professionalism in the mid-1920s so as to improve their economic situations. As a consequence, since that time their amateur teams had become weak, and Austria did not wish the FIFA competition to be reserved for amateurs alone.

Louis Østrup, the promoter of the Nordic Cup, came out against a competition in Central Europe, and Secretary Hirschman stated that the competition had not been accepted, either at the end of 1926 or in February in Zurich. Østrup's position was no doubt based on his distrust of professionalism, inasmuch as the Scandinavian associations remained attached to amateurism – at least in their statutes and regulations – throughout the interwar period. The Italian, Mauro, then emphasized that the game stood to benefit greatly from a proliferation of matches between the best national teams. He very much wanted his team to be authorized to take part in the International Cup.

However, the 1927 FIFA Congress took no decision concerning an international championship, eventually allowing Central Europe to develop its own competition projects (for clubs and for national teams), which were not formally forbidden.

The Italian Football Federation took up the matter a few weeks later, calling a meeting in Venice on 17–18 July 1927.<sup>44</sup> Supporting Italy's representatives (the Federation's Vice-President Mario Ferretti, Secretary Zanetti, and Mauro), were 'Dir Eng. Hans Fischer (Rapid) and Hugo Meisl [for Austria] [...] Secretary Scheinost for Czechoslovakia, Dr Szigety, Dr Fodor, M. Langfelder, and Eng. Fischer for Hungary, and finally Dr Marchi and Secretary Riboli for Yugoslavia'.<sup>45</sup> On the first day the discussions addressed only the Mitropa Cup, whose organization was defined in detail.

On the second day the delegates discussed the organization of a 'competition among the national associations of all the European countries'<sup>46</sup> and set up an organizational committee including 'as Chairman Eng. Fischer (Hungary), as Secretary Meisl (Austria), and Zanetti (Italy) as Treasurer – all

three named after an election – and Messrs Hans Fischer (Austria), Tivadar Kiss (Hungary), Scheinost (Czechoslovakia), and Schlegel (Switzerland)'.<sup>47</sup> Vienna was chosen as the headquarters, and for unclear reasons Switzerland was immediately involved, even if its football was not professional and if its inclusion in a Central European geographical frame is surprising.<sup>48</sup>

The competition began in the late summer of 1927 with the matches between the clubs, which included the following teams: Sparta Prague, Admira Vienna, Beogradski Sportsti Club, Hungaria from Budapest, Rapid from Vienna, Hajduk Split, Slavia Prague, and Ujpest from Budapest, as well as the inter-nations competition: the International Cup or Europa Cup. Four matches were played before the end of 1927 – Czechoslovakia-Austria (2–0); Hungary-Austria (5–3); Czechoslovakia-Italy (2–2); and Italy-Austria (0–1) – following a partial schedule announced during the summer.

However, FIFA did not formally recognize the International Cup,<sup>49</sup> whose matches continued to be regarded as 'friendly'. The Secretary's annual report, presented to the 1928 FIFA Congress, admitted no appeal:

The [1927] Congress 'decided to postpone [...] discussion of the proposal to create a Cup organized by FIFA and open to representative teams from affiliated associations' and 'to authorize the national associations to meet in a small group to organize championships between their representative teams, on the understanding that the competition rules and the list of participants must first be approved by the Executive Committee'.<sup>50</sup>

One of the principal features of Central European competitions in the 1927–30 period was that they involved almost exclusively teams and players that had become 'officially' professional,<sup>51</sup> while other continental countries like Germany and France continued to ponder the wisdom of introducing a new status for their football players.<sup>52</sup>

On the one hand, we have to emphasize FIFA's opportunistic approach, as the institution did not forbid the competition, which was soon hosting matches played in front of thousands of spectators. In the interwar period, the budget of the international institution was largely based on its taxation of the tickets from international games,<sup>53</sup> making it essential that the matches organized attracted large crowds.

On the other hand, the 'Swiss case' also highlights some particularities of a competition based on some 'long-lasting' traditions, as Switzerland had already played twelve games against Italy, nine games against Austria, seven games against Hungary and two games against Czechoslovakia. In the meantime, it is interesting that ASF's Annual Report mentioned these matches as part of a 'competition' only in its annual report for the 1928–9 season, making clear that excepting some major defeat,<sup>54</sup> participation was important to improve the level of the national team, whose major objective was the 1930 World Cup.<sup>55</sup>

By comparison, the chronology of the decisions that led to the organization of the first World Cup competition in Uruguay is obviously better known, because not only historians but the participants themselves have produced so many memoirs. Although no final decision had been reached by the end of 1927, and though Rimet's accounts of his 'arrangement' (dating from a meeting in 1925) with the Uruguayan Buero may need to be considered with caution,<sup>56</sup> the 1928 and 1929 Congresses did establish the operation, the location and the organization of the competition. The Delaunay-Bonnet-Meisl Commission, henceforth the 'Organizing Committee for the World Cup',<sup>57</sup> continued its work, and after having ratified joint participation by amateurs and professionals in the autumn of 1928<sup>58</sup> it planned the management and the distribution of revenues in early 1929. Although the members of the commission were not unanimous on this point, Rodolphe Seeldrayers imposed the responsibility for all of the costs (team travel and any deficits connected to the event's organization) on the organizing country, while on its side FIFA would 'make do' with 10 per cent of the gross revenues.<sup>59</sup> The 1929 Congress also finally decided to hold the tournament in Uruguay, after the Netherlands, Sweden, Argentina, Hungary, Italy and Spain withdrew their bids.<sup>60</sup>

However, the popular success of the matches in the first International Cup seems to have exceeded that of the World Cup held in Uruguay. Regarding the attendance at matches in Austria,<sup>61</sup> the historians Andreas and Wolfgang Hafer emphasize that although:

[...] the match between Austria and Switzerland in the autumn of 1926 had attracted only 19,000 spectators, the same match, played two years later as part of the competition, attracted 40,000 spectators, with Austria winning by two goals to none.

And even more spectators came to watch the 'Classics': 50,000 on April 1, 1928 for the match against Czechoslovakia, 60,000 on April 7, 1929 against Italy, and 50,000 one month later against Hungary.<sup>62</sup>

And the authors add that by that time it was no longer the appeal of the national *Wunderteam*<sup>63</sup> but was indeed the new competitive system that was boosting attendances at the Austrian team's matches.

The crowds were not as big in Uruguay, in any event not with the same regularity. Although the final drew 80,000 spectators to the Centennial Stadium, matches which did not involve Uruguay or Argentina barely exceeded 20,000 spectators, and some first-round matches were even played before fewer than 7,000 spectators (France-Mexico and Chile-Mexico, for example).

That the first World Cup remained a minor competition can also be seen in the media coverage of the event, and especially on the front pages of *L'Auto* or *Sport Tagblatt* after the final in Montevideo.<sup>64</sup> The championship format of the International Cup did not create a final like the official FIFA competition and thus led to less focused media interest, but the suspense was still considerable, and the sporting and symbolic stakes were high for the federations and for the nations involved.

### After 1930: The International Cup in the eye of the storm

In the 1930s the national teams of 'Central Europe' would effectively dominate international competition, following the British supremacy before 1914 and the South American ascendancy that began in 1924 in Paris, and then continued in 1928 in Amsterdam and in 1930 in Montevideo.

During the World Cup held in Italy in 1934, Central Europe's domination was further emphasized by the presence of Austria, Czechoslovakia and Italy among the semi-finalists. Two years later in Berlin, the final of the Olympic tournament pitted Austria against Italy: the teams that had occupied the leading two places in the first three International Cup competitions in 1930, 1932 and 1935. Italy was again in the final of the third

World Cup, held in France in 1938: the Azzuri played against Hungary and won their second consecutive title.

Football may have been invented in England, but the 1930s saw a pronounced shift towards the domination of an extended 'Danubian football'.<sup>65</sup> Although the institutionalization of professionalism obviously explains a large part of the success obtained by the teams from Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Austria, their participation in a competition regularly held since the end of 1927 promoted the kind of coaching that only few European players might experience at that time.<sup>66</sup> According to Dietrich Schulze-Marmeling, three characteristics defined the 'Danubian school of football':

- Its teams practiced a 'Scottish' type of football, based on a game of short passes, nimbleness, and elegance, incorporating a real individualism;
- Its teams were composed of professional players, whose training was rationalized;
- Its principal 'actors' were Jewish – like Hugo Meisl, for example – which was to cause many problems in the face of a rising totalitarianism, in particular nazism.<sup>67</sup>

As regards the organization and running of the International Cup, Western Europe's two totalitarianisms, fascism and Nazism, had somewhat different effects. On the one hand, Italy would both stimulate competition by its diplomacy and limit its aura by increasing the allure of the World Cup at the time of the 1934 tournament. On the other hand, and immediately afterwards, Germany would bring down the competition by its geopolitical decisions in Central Europe, and above all by its annexation of Austria in 1938. Though many studies have underlined the intrusions of totalitarianisms into modern sport, especially during the organization of major events like the 1934 football World Cup and the Berlin Olympic Games,<sup>68</sup> certain aspects of these intrusions have still to be uncovered.

Regarding the Italian commitment to the organization and the development of the International Cup, it is also quite obvious that the success of the Central European competition gave some power to Giovanni Mauro in his plan to promote a deep reorganization within FIFA's governance

in the the early 1930s. Formally, the process was driven by Hugo Meisl who 'severely criticized the work of the executive committee'<sup>69</sup> at the 1930 FIFA Congress, both for its work on the World Cup organization and for its management of relations with the British associations.<sup>70</sup> Joined by Dr Pelikan (Czechoslovakian representative) and Fischer (Vice-President and a Hungarian)<sup>71</sup> this attempt initiated a reform of the governance of the international federation. One of the ambitions was to promote a more equal recognition of the national associations composing FIFA, trying to attribute votes during congresses, on the basis of the seniority of each association and of the size of each national association (number of clubs and number of players).<sup>72</sup> Interestingly, Central Europe was then supported by Germany, whose teams were not participating in regional competitions, but which was strengthening its power in the football sphere. Considering this fact, it is not a surprise to note that *Kicker* was probably the newspaper (more so even than the Swiss press), which gave the most space to the Central European competitions.

Beyond some severe criticism of the platform of the Central European delegates from members of the Executive Committee, like the Belgian Rodolphe Seeldrayers, the reorganization can be seen as a success, even if it is maybe less obvious than other reforms undertaken after the Second World War.<sup>73</sup> In July 1931, Mauro and Pelikan were included in the Executive Committee, respectively as Vice-President and member, after Bonnet and Ferretti resigned. In the meantime, though Hirschman was also reappointed as Secretary Treasurer in 1931, he was at the twilight of his career. A few months later, due to banking embezzlements, he resigned from the board of the international institution. And once again, Central European delegates obtained reforms and change in the way FIFA was ruled. If Hugo Meisl was not chosen by the Executive Committee to be the new Secretary<sup>74</sup> – now to be paid for his work – delegates from Central Europe clearly supported Switzerland, as the new hosting country for the future seat of the Federation,<sup>75</sup> 'being a neutral and in any respect well situated country'.<sup>76</sup> With fourteen votes against eleven (for Paris), Switzerland was chosen in 1932<sup>77</sup> and the German Ivo Schricker became the new permanent General Secretary of FIFA, vacating his seat on the Executive Committee, of which he had been member since 1927.<sup>78</sup>



Italy's appointment as host country for the final round of the second football World Cup in 1934 drastically improved the size and international reputation of the competition. According to Daphné Bolz, fascism tapped into a major dynamic of sporting endeavours in the interwar period, namely the development of sport as spectacle. The selection, made by FIFA at its 1932 Congress in Stockholm<sup>79</sup> and ratified by the Executive Committee a few months later, directed the World Cup into a new era. Although Austria, Czechoslovakia and Italy reached the semi-finals, the International Cup, which had brought them together so regularly since 1927 was to be overshadowed. Thus, the involvement of Italy in the competition and the success of the 1934 World Cup may be said to have offset an Italian initiative in the Danube Basin, in particular to support the 'Little Entente' and to ensure a lasting pre-eminence in this geographic space, to be achieved by football competitions.

Even more than fascism however, the rise of Nazism, especially after 1933, would upset the balance of the European sporting field, particularly Central European football. In fact, as we have already noted, the Danubian school of football was based on the recruitment of elite Jewish players from Vienna, Budapest and Prague, and when the Nazis annexed Austria they were 'dumbfounded by the number of "Jews" encountered at every level of the game,'<sup>80</sup> not only as players but also as referees and managers in the clubs, especially in Vienna. Moreover, the *Anschluss* 'in the absence of any action from France or England [...] [brought about] the collapse of the Little Entente'<sup>81</sup> and led to the suspension of the fourth International Cup competition. With four matches still to be played, the disappearance of Austria as a sovereign nation made it impossible to complete the scheduled programme.

The third World Cup took place a few months later, and it must be said that the format selected for this competition appeared much more resistant to geopolitical events. Austria, which had initially qualified for the final rounds of this tournament, played in France in June 1938 but did not exist as an autonomous country after the *Anschluss*. However, this disappearance 'only' led to the cancellation of a first-round match, allowing Sweden to evade a hazardous encounter. However, the Austrian players did take part in the competition, but under the swastika flag of the new Greater Germany,<sup>82</sup> which was eliminated in the first round.<sup>83</sup>

## Conclusion

After the Second World War, the International Cup resumed with a fifth contest played between 1948 and 1953, and then a sixth between 1955 and 1960, during which Yugoslavia was added to the five other nations involved. In addition, the Balkan Cup of 1948 is sometimes considered a sort of companion to the International Cup, because of the participation of Hungary, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, but once again the competition did not manage to complete all its scheduled matches and left a classification that was incomplete, though dominated by Hungary, then on the verge of becoming the dominant football nation on the European continent.<sup>84</sup> The competition was not renewed after 1960, because since 1954–5 the continent had had its own confederation, UEFA, which organized its first inter-nations tournament in 1960.<sup>85</sup>

During the interwar period, Central Europe played a key role in the development of football at the international level. The competition which under the name of International Cup brought together Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Italy and Switzerland, was very closely connected to the development of the World Cup, providing decisive input to FIFA's main leaders as they set about organizing the latter, despite on-going challenges.

In describing how it came about, we are also beginning to study the social history of the football elites, a history which still has important gaps in need of filling. Although the conservation of Europe's archives is highly variable – particularly owing to the damage caused by the Nazi occupation in certain countries – newspaper files can be used to reconstruct, if sometimes partially, the outlines of those networks of individuals who often combined positions in club administration, refereeing, the running of national federations and activities on the international scene (in FIFA or on ad hoc committees like those that ran the Central European competitions). Among all the actors mentioned, Hugo Meisl was obviously a key personality in establishing this competition, but it was indeed a network within FIFA and the national federations of Austria, Germany, Italy, Hungary and Switzerland, which enabled the organization of regular matches for the International Cup and its management, and which only the most serious political events could challenge.

In conclusion, it is interesting to note that in the report by the Secretary of FIFA for the years 1936 and 1937, just below Hugo Meisl's obituary notice, Ivo Schrickler mentions a 'FIFA match' between Central Europe (Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Italy) and Western Europe (Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands).<sup>86</sup> This match, held in Amsterdam following a proposal by Karel Lotsy and 'played before more than 60,000 spectators'<sup>87</sup> was won by the team from Central Europe by three goals to one.

Although this match was not the only one between two supranational entities (many matches were played between the United Kingdom and continental Europe), it testified to the ever-growing cohesion of the geographic groupings and 'game spaces' formed during the interwar period, especially that in Central Europe associated with the International Cup and its most devoted architect during the 1920s and 1930s, namely Hugo Meisl. However, both in terms of the individuals and institutions involved much work remains to understand the networks that were mobilized in order to make those matches possible.

## Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Philippe Vonnard, for the helpful comments and inputs he shared with me and which have significantly contributed to this chapter.
- 2 Barbara J. Keys, *Globalizing Sport: National Rivalry and International Community in the 1930s* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Robert Frank, 'Internationalisation du sport et diplomatie sportive' in Robert Frank, eds, *Pour l'histoire des relations internationales* (Paris: PUF, 2012) 387–405; Heather Dichter and Andrew Johns, eds, *Diplomatic Games: Sport, Statecraft, and International Relations since 1945* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2014).
- 3 Heidrun Homburg, 'Financing World Football: A Business History of the Fédération Internationale de Football Association', *Zeitschrift für Unternehmensgeschichte* 53/1 (2008), 33–69.
- 4 For Britain or Italy, see: Peter Beck, *Scoring for Britain: International Football and International politics, 1900–1939* (London: F. Cass 1999); Simon Martin,

- Football and Fascism: The National Game under Mussolini* (Oxford; New York: Berg, 2004).
- 5 Penelope Kissoudi, 'Sport, Politics and International Relations in the Twentieth Century', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 25/13 (2008), 1689–706.
  - 6 Florence Carpentier, 'Le conflit entre le CIO et la FIFA dans l'entre-deux-guerres. Les Jeux Olympiques contre la Coupe du Monde de football', *Staps* 68 (2005), 25–39.
  - 7 Paul Dietschy, 'Did a 'Europe of Football' Exist in the 1930s?', *Sport in History* 35/4 (2015), 515–30. See also the chapter by Xavier Breuil in the present volume.
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- 49 Marschik, 'Mitteleuropa: Politische Konzepte', 98.
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