



**SPORTS DURING THE AXIS
OCCUPATION OF GREECE: SPORTS ASSOCIATIONS'
COMPLIANCE AND RESISTANCE, 1941-1944**

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Abstract:

The Hellenic Association of Amateur Athletics (HAAA) and the Union of Greek Athletes (UGA) were two pivotal sports organizations in Greece. However, their actions during the German occupation of Greece were diametrically opposed. Specifically, HAAA chose to suspend its activities following the German invasion, whereas UGA initiated its actions after the famine of 1942. This dichotomy is interpreted through the lens of ideological polarization between progressivism and conservatism. The HAAA's decision to accept the new political situation and cease its activities, in contrast to the UGA's choice to resist and support the athletic and broader Athenian society, is analyzed in ideological terms. The Communist Party of Greece (CPG) supported the progressive ideology expressed by the UGA. Athletes recognized its contribution in contrast to the ideologically conservative HAAA.

Keywords: political ideologies; Greece; Occupation; World War II; sports organizations

1. Introduction

During the German occupation, HAAA's President Michalis Rinopoulos and UGA's Vice-President Grigoris Lamprakis were primarily responsible for the actions of the two

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unions (HAAA)ⁱⁱ and (UGA)ⁱⁱⁱ accordingly. These actions are interpreted through the prism of conservatism and progressivism. The research focuses on the relationship between: a) the two organizations b) the Communist Party of Greece (CPG)^{iv} and these organizations, c) their administrative moves, and d) the Greek athletes and the two entities. The findings of the research are examined in relation to the ideologies adopted by the representatives of the two organisations, the CPG and the Greek athletes.

Under the Axis occupation of Greece, athletics initially took a back seat as survival became the top priority for Greek society. In the new political reality, tendencies of both compliance and resistance emerged in all aspects of social life, including sports. Sporting life was marginalized due to the cessation of activities by various sports organizations, including the Hellenic Association of Amateur Athletics. The Hellenic Olympic Committee, as the highest sports authority responsible for issues related to the organization and preparation of pre-Olympic teams, as well as the operation of most major sports venues, also remained inactive (Skiadas, 1996, p. 330-331). The decision of these organizations to suspend their activities could be seen as an acceptance of the new political situation. However, the establishment of the Union of Greek Athletes emerged as a form of resistance to the new political framework. The UGA aimed to organize sports activities, providing economic, material, and moral support to athletes suffering from the famine of the time. It represented a substantial contribution to both athletes and the nation and carried symbolic significance in resisting the new circumstances. Both the HAAA and UGA undoubtedly acted in ways that benefited not only Greek sports but also the nation.

The actions of the HAAA and UGA could be better understood within the framework of the earlier period of the occupation of Greece. This could highlight the ideological and political origins of the two associations, an important tool for interpreting their actions during the occupation. Their behaviour was not random but traced back to their ideological principles.

2. Concise historical context: from the interwar to the post-occupation period, 1922-1946

In the Greek interwar period, a predominant political conflict existed between liberalism, chiefly represented by Eleftherios Venizelos and the conservative forces of the country. The Venizelist-anti-Venizelist dispute derived its name from Venizelos, who was a central political figure of the era. Generally, Venizelos and the Venizelists represented the most progressive part of the political spectrum, in contrast to the anti-Venizelist conservative faction, which often expressed pro-monarchic sentiments (Mazower, 1994,

ⁱⁱ The abbreviation in Greek is SEGAS, however, in this article, the English abbreviation HAAA is used.

ⁱⁱⁱ Accordingly, the abbreviation in Greek is EEA, however, in this article, the English abbreviation UGA is used.

^{iv} The abbreviation in Greek is KKE, however, in this article, the English abbreviation CPG is used.

p. 123). Although Venizelos espoused liberalism, it should be noted that Greece had its peculiarities. The Greek bourgeois class expressing liberal ideals significantly differed from its European counterpart. In Greece, the bourgeois class maintained a multifaceted political expression, shaping an ambiguous political ideology that, while projected as liberal, retained conservative characteristics stemming from the patriarchal structures of society. This discrepancy arose because the emergence of the Greek bourgeois class did not follow the same path as that of Europe. Generally, the Greek bourgeois class was perceived as one that did not desire the socialist transformation of society (Kondilis, 2007, p. 22). Simultaneously, in 1918, the Communist Party of Greece was founded, attempting to establish itself as a workers' party and gain support from the Greek people. During the later stages of the interwar period, under the totalitarian regime of Metaxas (1936-1940), the CPG significantly declined but gained prominence during the Axis occupation of Greece as a resistance force (Aggelis, 2006, p. 238; Mazower, 1994, p. 120-124).

During the interwar period, totalitarian regimes arose in various European countries: Italy, Germany, Spain, Albania, Portugal, Austria, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Lithuania, and Greece. These regimes were often influenced by fascist or national socialist ideologies. Meanwhile, socialism was the ideological basis for the Soviet Union while liberalism found expression in the political systems of the capitalist USA and England. World War II could be seen as a conflict between the ideologies of liberalism and communism on one side and fascism/national socialism on the other (Ertman, 1998).

In the late Greek interwar period, Greece followed the European fascist and Nazi trends (Papastratis, 2005). The totalitarian regime of Metaxas (1936-1940) was imposed, citing the communist threat, and extended until the start of the Greco-Italian War in October 1940, marking Greece's involvement in World War II. Despite the influence of the Metaxas regime from fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, Greece's decision to align with England in World War II, rather than with the Axis, was based on various factors, including Metaxas's peaceful and non-expansionist policy, his strong allegiance to England, and the presence of the pro-British King George II. Additionally, strategic reasons influenced this decision. Due to Greece's geographical location, Metaxas sought to avoid conflict with any country that constituted a naval power (Ploumidis, 2016). His decision to align with Britain, despite maintaining good relations with Germany and establishing a dictatorship following fascist patterns (Koliopoulos, 2015), was made in accordance with national interest. Despite Mussolini's assurances of non-aggression towards Greece in September 1939, Italy's expansionist aspirations and invasion of Albania prompted Metaxas to maintain Greece's traditional relations with Britain (Mazower, 1994).

After the successful Greco-Italian War, Germany invaded Greece, leading to a triple occupation in April 1941. The country was divided into occupation administrative zones controlled by Germany, Italy and Bulgaria (Santarelli, 2007; Voglis, 2017, p. 38). Germany retained areas deemed strategically and politically important, including Attica, while the rest was divided between Italy and Bulgaria. During the occupation, three

occupation governments were appointed by the Germans: The Tsolakoglou government (April 1941-February 1942), the Konstantinos Logothetopoulos government (February 1942- April 1943), and the Ioannis Rallis government (April 1943-October 1944). Concurrently, the official government of Emmanouil Tsouderos, along with King George II escaped to the Middle East due to the country's occupation by the Axis (Mazower, 1994, pp. 24-97).

The famine of 1941-1942, during which thousands of citizens died from hunger, represented the darkest period of the occupation (Kyrou, 2013, p. 157). Occupation conditions profoundly divided the Greek people. Many Greek elites collaborated with the Germans (collaborators), while others joined the security units created by the last occupation government, which had an anti-communist focus, and others joined the resistance. The resistance was organized by both the country's urban forces and the left. The urban resistance was embodied through the establishment of the National Democratic Greek League. Meanwhile, the popular resistance consisted of the formation of the National Liberation Front (NLF),^v the largest resistance organization created under the initiative and guidance of the Greek Communist Party and of other left-wing parties (Fleischer, 1995, pp. 25-50; Stavrianos, 1952, pp. 42-45). With the contribution of the allies (England, USA, Soviet Union) and the domestic resistance, Athens was liberated from the Germans in October 1944.

3. The social structure of HAAA and UGA through the prism of the interwar ideologies

In the Late Greek Interwar period, sports reflected the political and ideological developments both internationally and nationally. They were utilized by the ideologies of the interwar period as a means of manipulation, depending on the ideology from which they were practiced. Nazism, fascism, liberalism and socialism instrumentalized sports to achieve their own ends. This international approach to sports also influenced Greece, as it resulted from the social and ideological composition of the individuals who constituted HAAA and UGA.

In the course of the interwar period, the rise of socialist ideology led to a clear distinction between the bourgeois perception of sports and the socialist one (Arnaud & Riordan, 1998). From the bourgeois perspective, sports embodied characteristics such as competition, high performance, individual distinction through personal effort, and values that were aligned with the capitalist mode of production (Mc Donald, 2015, pp. 42-46). This philosophy emphasized an individual-centred approach to sports. Conversely, socialist standards promoted a socio-centric approach, viewing individuals as carriers of social relations (Rigauer, 2000, pp. 32-44). Within socialism, sports aimed at the holistic development of individuals through various athletic practices, integrated into a broader process of societal progress (Zetkin, 1924, p. 59; Gounot, 2001, pp. 23-39; "The Organization", 2015; Keys, 2013, pp. 413-434). Regarding nationalist-socialist ideology,

^v The abbreviation in Greek is EAM, however, in this article, the English abbreviation NLF is used.

the nation was the cornerstone, pursued through state mechanisms, while fascist ideology sought the submission of the nation to the leader to strengthen the state (Vandoros, 2015, pp. 130-135; Heywood, 2007).

These perceptions naturally influenced sports, which were utilised according to respective ideological directions. Under fascist ideology, sports were instrumentalized for the fascistization of society, submission to the leader, promotion of national ideals, and ultimately, state strengthening. Nazi ideology used sports to promote the race, with the state as the means. In both cases, sports operated in three common directions. Firstly, by engaging the youth to prevent regime undermining and political involvement. Secondly, by international propaganda to symbolize cultural dominance through athletic superiority and, thirdly, by creating capable soldiers for the homeland (Tunis, 1935). The totalitarian Greek regime of Metaxas followed fascist patterns as expressed in Mussolini's Italy, using sports to strengthen the state, maintain submission to the leader, and create loyal young individuals through a military-style discipline, as expressed through the National Youth Organization (Albanidis & Ioannidis, 2014, pp. 16-17).

The administrators of HAAA and UGA adopted the ideologies of the interwar period and left their mark on the course of sports during the occupation. Both organizations acted based on their ideological positions, which gave different dimensions to their courses of action. A brief historical context is important to comprehend the issue in depth. HAAA was founded in January 1897, shortly after the revival of the modern Olympic Games and was closely associated with them. During their preparation arose a desire to create an organization encompassing all sports clubs (Koulouri, 1997, pp. 141-142). Since then, HAAA has performed administrative functions for most of the country's sports life. As evident from the journal issued by HAAA, it had Technical Committees responsible for organizing and administering its tasks, reflecting the magnitude of its administrative responsibility and the void created after the suspension of its actions. These committees included the Technical Committee of Athletics, Technical Committee of Women's Athletics, Technical Committee of Youth Sports, Technical Committee of Provincial Sports, Technical Committee of Combat Sports, Sports Medicine Committee, Press and Enlightenment Committee and Judicial Committee. HAAA, in addition to organizing classical sports, supervised sports that had no association of their own, such as shooting, horse riding, gymnastics, cycling, fencing, volleyball and basketball. The technical committees functioned like sub-federations, having similar authority to that of a federation. Considering they governed all the sports mentioned earlier, which did not yet have their own federations, it was apparent that they were the largest Greek administrative sports institution.

During the occupation, Michalis Rinopoulos served as the president of the HAAA. Rinopoulos, a businessman, lawyer and son of a merchant, likely aligned with liberal ideology, was portrayed in communist publications as an exponent of fascist-militaristic sports, linking national aspirations with the content of physical education (Loules, 1929, p. 3). HAAA consisted of 3 vice presidents. The other two were Christos Zalokostas, a royalist involved in industry, and Konstantinos Nikolopoulos, who served as Minister of

Transport during Ioannis Metaxa's regime ("General Tactical", 1940, pp. 14-15; Kousoulinis, 2016; Tsimas, 2014). Other prominent figures included general secretary Apostolos Nikolaides, who was elected president in the 1945 elections and was associated with progressive Venizelist factions and Michalis Manouskos, an industrialist and mayor of Piraeus appointed by the Metaxas government until 1941, who served as an advisor to HAAA. He was a significant figure for the city of Piraeus and served as the president of Olympiacos Piraeus during the periods 1925-1928, 1937-1939, and 1945-1950. The president (Rinopoulos) and vice-presidents (Christos Zalokostas and Konstantinos Nikolopoulos) played central roles in decision-making. HAAA's offices were located in Kolonaki.^{vi}

Conversely, UGA was established by economically weaker individuals compared to those of HAAA or affiliated with NLF, which advocated leftist values. Founding members of UGA included Renos Fragoudis (president), an eleven-time Balkan champion in running events, Grigoris Lambrakis (vice-president), a doctor and Balkan champion in the long jump, Elias Misailidis (general secretary), a Greek champion in running events, and Andreas Skiadas, a track and field athlete and a Balkan champion. Other notable members were Giannis Palamiotis, Giorgos Thanos, Stavros Velkopoulos, Giorgos Marinakis, Vangelis Helmis, Vasilis Mavrapostolos, and Dalianis (Andreou, 2010; Bratsos, 2020, p. 63). Lamprakis and Skiadas were particularly active. Lamprakis, a doctor and NLF member ideologically aligned with democratic and liberal movements, participated in the Resistance during the occupation and maintained a good relationship with appointed Prime Minister Konstantinos Logothetopoulos, his university professor. This relationship likely contributed to the government's tolerance of UGA's active stance during the occupation (Andreou, 2010, p. 27). Skiadas, a founding member of UGA, was the chief editor of 'Athletika Nea' newspaper. Overall, UGA members were either of lower social status compared to those governing HAAA or were leftist, originating from a higher social and bourgeois class lacking a cohesive political imprint.

Interwar's ideologies determined the course of sports to a great degree. In the case of HAAA, its senior administrative members were either directly involved with the fascist Metaxas regime or were accused of being exponents of militaristic sports, or even in cases where their social position favoured liberal ideas, in the Greek case, these preserved conservative remnants of an earlier period. From the UGA's side, the people who constituted it were of lower social class and identified more with the values of the left. The participation of its members in the NLF demonstrated the complete ideological opposition of the two bodies and their conflict in relation to the reception of the course of sports during the occupation.

^{vi} Kolonaki refers to an area where people of high social status resided. During the years of the occupation, the culture of the area became associated with collaboration with the conquerors.

4. The role of HAAA and UGA in occupation as a result of their ideological contradictions

The occupation of Greece by the Axis was interpreted in different ways inside the country. Both the political world and the people were divided as to how they should act under these circumstances. The same thing happened in sports. Its course depended on the attitude of the people who were in the management of the sports bodies towards the new political reality. UGA's attitude proved that maintaining the sports movement in the country was not impossible. However, the choice of HAAA was definitely more of an easy way out.

Following Greece's surrender to the Germans, HAAA suspended its activities. This decision, was later justified by its president Rinopoulos representing the entire board (Christos Zalokostas, Konstantinos Nikolopoulos, etc.) as serving the national interest ("After the Elections", 1946, pp. 14-15). The resulting organizational vacuum in sports was significant, given HAAA's influence over the country's sports activities. The suspension of HAAA and other sports organizations left athletes without material support, and sports were abandoned from an organizational perspective. Sporting activities were severely limited or eliminated due to the absence of a governing sports institution. The establishment of UGA after the famine of 1942 filled the administrative gap, revitalizing the sports movement and, through it, the Athenian society, which was enduring the tragic circumstances of famine and hardship^{vii} (Sterpis, 2023; Skalidakis, 2012, pp. 93-95). Thus, the cessation of official sports bodies, primarily due to HAAA, was likely the reason for UGA's creation. Ioannis Skiadas, a founding member of UGA, indicated:^{viii}

Hunger slowly reaped the people, and profiteers thrived. HAAA, with its offices in Kolonaki had fallen into lethargy while tuberculosis patients, on the brink of death, were crowded in 'Sotiria' Hospital. Somewhere between the harsh winter and the spring of 1942, in a house on Archimedes Street, behind the Panathenaic Stadium, a few friends gathered ... They decided to establish the Union of Greek Athletes, aiming to provide economic, material, and moral support to sick and unemployed athletes, as well as to organize sports events, the proceeds of which would be used to operate community kitchens in Athens. (Andreou, 2010, p. 26)

Andreas Skiada's testimony on the founding of UGA highlighted the dire conditions due to famine and the suffering experienced by the Athenian people as the impetus behind UGA's creation. Through UGA, sports began to offer assistance to the 'ailing' athletes and, to some extent, the Athenian community. An article in 'Athlitismos'

^{vii} The most devastating period of the occupation pertains to the famine of the winter of 1942, during which thousands of people died.

^{viii} Lamprakis and Misailidis, as founding members of the UGA, were opponents of HAAA. Furthermore, Lambrou, Syllas, Mavrapostolos, Stefanakis, Stratakis, Kostavaras, and Palamiotis took a stand against HAAA post-occupation due to its decision to suspend its activities during the occupation. More details regarding them are discussed below.

newspaper republished a UGA article listing 13 points related to the Union's sports policy. Among these points were two concerning the care of athletes' basic needs: free medical treatment and the elevation of their social status: "*Point five: Social welfare for athletes, finding employment for unemployed athletes, and overall elevation of their social level. Point six: Regular medical monitoring and free medical care*" ("Here is what", 1945, p. 1).

From both Skiadas's testimony and these points, it was evident that UGA's establishment was motivated by the exclusive focus on the material, economic, and social support of athletes. The ideological oppositions of the two associations led to a rift between them, expressed in various ways. The propaganda against UGA's actions by HAAA and accusations that its members were operating illegally or were communists prominently featured in this rhetoric. HAAA's decision to suspend its activities was based on serving national interests. However, it is not adequately clarified how the Greek people benefited from this choice. Additionally, in Rinopoulos's statement regarding HAAA's stance, extensive discussion was avoided, whereas the first release of the HAAA magazine states: "*We will not talk about the past seven years. Our sports movement does not only look back. Our gaze and all our attention are focused on the future*" ("After the Elections", 1946, pp. 14-15; "Accounting of One Year", 1947, pp. 4-10). Consequently, HAAA adapted to the new situation. In other words, the suspension of its activities after the country's subjugation to the Germans can be interpreted within the framework of adopting a conservative perspective. This perspective was founded on accepting the current political situation characterized by the transfer of power to the Germans through the lens of 'natural inequality' where conservatives and liberals believed in distributing power and authority unequally among individuals (Skoulas, 2010, p. 66). The adjustment of HAAA to conservative ideals possibly facilitated the 'justification' of its choice to discontinue its actions during the occupation. Wanting to act in the national interest, HAAA discontinued its activities. This aligned with the conservative ideology, which sought to maintain 'political stability' to make people feel secure. The new political/occupation situation that ensured 'political stability' was possibly the occupation government.

From various publications of HAAA in 1939 and earlier, it was evident that Greek sports followed an ethnocentric approach linked to the broader course of the nation. According to HAAA's narrative and given the totalitarian regime of Ioannis Metaxas, sports were portrayed as a means to distinguish the Greek race due to its ancient Greek sports heritage ("*Physical Education*", 1940, pp.1-13). These references might have been a result of the Metaxas regime. However, even after the liberation, references to the great ancient Greek athletic heritage and the 'New great sports Greece' continued ("*Fifty years*", 1948, pp. 1-2; "*Sports in 1947*", 1948, pp. 1-5). The 'athletic idealism' did not end for HAAA in the interwar period but testified to their national consciousness and the high national sentiment that characterized them, believing their actions were always for the nation's benefit.

The establishment of UGA took place during the George Tsolakoglou government. The subjugation of the country to the Axis was interpreted differently by the political

world of the time, depending on its ideological position. Part of the conservative world aligned with the conquerors. Given that the Greek bourgeois class was not politically cohesive, it also expressed conservative remnants such as the desire to ensure 'political occupational stability' (Skoulas, 2010, p. 66). Representatives of this class, such as Christos Zalokostas, Konstantinos Nikolopoulos, and Michalis Rinopoulos, who constituted the senior members in the administration of HAAA, ceased their activities, believing this appointment was the most nationally advantageous.

Even the conservative press of the time changed its stance regarding the policy the country should follow. An indicative case is the newspaper 'Kathimerini', which described the country's subjugation to the Germans as an inevitable and rather beneficial choice that served the homeland. The title of the newspaper article describing this event was indicative: *"Enemies and friends unanimously acknowledge that our army did its duty"* (Giannoukos et al., 2022; "Internal and External", 1941, p. 2). It is apparent from the above excerpt that subjugation was presented as a national benefit since the Greek army's duty was to come to terms with the conqueror. According to conservative ideology, the existence of social order and the assurance of a stable and predictable life could and must be ensured by a political body through which individuals feel safe. This might also explained the conservative newspaper's change in stance. In a similar manner, the cessation of HAAA's activity could be understood as a result of adopting a conservative perspective, which did not constitute an identity with the conqueror but rather with serving national interests. In any case, the creation of the UGA was sabotaged by HAAA through various practices. Thus, on 23 February 1943, a publication in the newspaper 'Kathimerini'^{ix} stated that HAAA called on athletes not to participate in the sports events of the UGA, as it operated illegally ("Sports", 1943, p. 2). This publication was also confirmed by Balkan champion Ioannis Skiadas in an interview in 1943 (one year after UGA's establishment):

The Union of Greek Athletes has nothing to do with the institution of HAAA but with the culprits who, instead of praising its work, consider it illegal. In fact, in February of this year, HAAA published an official announcement in the newspaper 'Proia'^x denouncing the Union of Greek Athletes as an illegal organization and threatening all athletes registered with it with removal from its records and various other incomprehensible penalties. But can an illegal organization address our country's authorities and be granted permits for organizing sports events and concerts? Recently, the Prime Minister, Mr. Konstantinos Logothetopoulos, took under his protection the

^{ix} 'Kathimerini' was a daily political newspaper founded by G. Vlachos in 1919. It was a four-page newspaper with six columns and dimensions of 0.58*0.86. The newspaper expressed conservative ideals. From its inception, the newspaper aligned itself with conservative ideologies. During the Greco-Italian War, it supported Greece's alliance with the British, while during the German occupation, it shifted its support towards the Germans.

^x Proia newspaper expressed conservative ideals (Mager, 1957, pp. 257-264).

sports celebration and the match,^{xi} that we organized at the stadium. (Andreou, 2010, p. 36)

This reflected HAAA's disposition to suppress UGA's activities, even by employing implausible arguments, according to Ioannis Skiadas, such as referring to UGA as an illegal organization. Indeed, in the newspaper 'Proia', HAAA stated the following:

"It considers the 'Union of Greek Athletes, the arena' as illegally existing and unlawfully working to the detriment of Greek sports and the athletic idea. It notifies Greek athletes and sports fans, especially those belonging to its affiliated clubs, to dissociate themselves from the Union and have no further relations with it. Apart from the risk of losing their status as sports fans, they will also be subject to strict punishment under the rules of the HAAA and international sports regulations." ("Sports, Announcement by SEGAS", 1943, p. 2)

HAAA's target to dissolve UGA did not rely solely on the above accusations. Through a publication in 'Athlitismos' newspaper,^{xii} a memorandum from UGA intended for the Prime Minister accuses HAAA of referring to its members as communists and of handing over some athletes to the Gestapo. These athletes were Mavrapostolos, Thanos, Velikopoulos, Nitsas, Stefanakis, and Eleftheriadis ("HAAA Must Apologize", 1945, p. 2). Despite UGA's accusations, it was not known whether HAAA actually engaged in divisive practices or if it was just a defensive tactic of UGA. According to reports from that time and Ioannis Skiadas' testimony, HAAA aimed to use any means necessary, even unfair ones, to halt UGA's activities.

Remarkably, UGA operated freely within this challenging political framework, while HAAA chose to suspend its operations. According to Andreou's book, regarding Lamprakis's reaction to HAAA's accusations: *"Lamprakis, the head of the athletes' team, stormed into the offices of HAAA and caused a violent incident. Afterwards, they all headed to the Friendly Society Square to crown Xanthos' monument while singing the national anthem."*^{xiii}

^{xi} This refers to a football match at the Alexandras Avenue Stadium between Panathinaikos Athletic Club (PAO) and Constantinople Athletic Association (AEK), as well as a sports celebration held at the Panathinaikos Stadium by the UGA with the aim of providing financial support to tuberculosis-stricken athletes. It is worth mentioning that the match never took place because, on the one hand, the desire to appoint an Austrian referee and refusal of the occupation forces to give part of the proceeds to the tuberculosis-stricken athletes led players and footballers to an anti-occupation protest with approximately 15,000 people, the dissolution of which required the intervention of the occupation forces (Bratsos, 2020, pp. 61-62; Andreou, 2010, p. 27).

^{xii} The Athlitismos newspaper had purely sports content. It had been circulating since the Interwar period and was published every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The newspaper editor was the journalist Pavlos Krinaios.

^{xiii} The Friendly Society was a secret organization aimed at preparing the Greek Revolution of 1821. Its founding members were three individuals, one of whom was Xanthos.

From this excerpt, it is apparent the government's tolerance towards UGA's activities thanks to the relationship between Prime Minister Logothetopoulos and Lamprakis. Logothetopoulos was Lamprakis's professor at the medical school at the University of Athens. The two collaborated on various scientific theses (Andreou, 2010). However, despite HAAA's efforts to undermine the activities of UGA, the latter continued to enhance athletic life with the primary goal of social contribution and support for athletes through job opportunities, healthcare, and other initiatives. At the same time, HAAA was accused of causing many athletes to end up in sanatoriums due to its choice to suspend operations. Skiadas stated again:

"Now HAAA is called to answer: Where are the Traulis brothers, Papathanasiou, Dalianis? And why have sanatoriums and hospitals been filled with former champions of athletics, football, and other sports. Vergini, Pantalesko, Fikiore, Korre, Nikitopoulos, Loukopoulos, Kampantai, Polychronopoulos, Paschalinos, Panopoulos, Sariani, Nano?" (Andreou, 2010, p. 36)

Recognizing the difficult living conditions in Athenian society, UGA initiated its work by addressing the basic needs of Greek athletes. It also focused on education, pedagogy and support for its members, including the establishment of libraries. An indicative example was the allocation of 65 volumes by the Mayor of Athens, Angelos Georgatos, from the municipal library to creating a sports library (Andreou, 2010, p. 29). Moreover, UGA's entertaining and progressive dimension was reflected in the seventh of its 13 points, which cited *"the creation of sports clubs with sports libraries, foreign sports magazines, organization of lectures, cinemas screening purely sports-related films, free foreign language lessons, and overall education of athletes (athlete's entertainment, excursions, joyful gatherings, etc."* ("Here is What We Want", 1945, p. 1). Through this point, UGA set its sights on creating a network of athletes, promoting cooperation and collegiality. The fact that its actions aimed at horizontally supporting athletes in need reflected the socialist ideological principle of equality, considering all individuals equal regardless of their talents and gifts.

It is clear that the two organizations moved diametrically opposite, reflecting at the same time their opposing ideological positions. HAAA adopted a rhetoric that aligned itself with the fascist proposals of Metaxas. The identification of sports with the promotion of the nation that Rinopoulos attempted during the reactivation of HAAA undeniably advocates this. HAAA functioned with malice towards the UGA, which, by prioritizing the coverage of livelihood needs but also the growth of athletes, seemed to adopt a logic that is identified with progressive ideologies, in this case, left, since prominent members of it belonged to the NFL. Probably, UGA's creation would not have taken place if it had not been preceded by the suspension of HAAA.

6. The support of the CPG to UGA. The post-occupation period, 1944-1946

Material Following the expulsion of the Germans, the resumption of administrative initiative in sports became paramount. HAAA gradually attempted to re-establish its activities, while UGA already dominated the majority of the sports scene. Given this situation, the two sporting institutions endeavoured to define their new roles within the emerging political framework. Their confrontation reflected broader societal struggles for governmental power^{xiv} (Rafailidis, 2010; Katsikostas, 2010). The ideological conflict permeating Greek society extended to the realm of sports. While the National Liberation Front - Greek People's Liberation Army (NFL) and the exiled Greek governments supported by the British to assume power are in dispute, a parallel conflict unfolded between UGA and HAAA in the field of sports^{xv} (Tzoukas, 2003, pp. 16-18). During this period, the CPG demonstrated a positive disposition towards UGA, in contrast to HAAA. This alignment between the CPG and UGA was highlighted in publications such as 'Rizospastis'^{xvi} and 'Nea Genia'^{xvii} (the magazine of the Unified Panhellenic Organization of Youth [UPOY])^{xviii} (Dimitropoulos & Olimpitiou, 2000). An article published on 20 May 1945 accused HAAA of leading sports into a major decline by remaining inactive during the occupation. The magazine criticized HAAA's management, stating that it no longer had the power to organize inter-club competitions, thereby implying its inability to resume sports administration in the country. This article coincided with HAAA's attempts to organize the first post-occupation sports events. Simultaneously, the magazine urged clubs to send young people to the HAAA assembly, believing that those new members could support sports with enthusiasm and sportsmanship, changing in that way the current administration that was comprised of an elderly, non-sports-oriented population with outdated views. This perspective aligns with one of UGA's 13 points concerning the organization of sports life. Through this publication, the CPG appeared willing to accept HAAA after the war, but not with its current administrative

^{xiv} After the end of the German occupation, the issue of assuming power emerged, which was claimed on one side by the British in cooperation with the exiled Greek governments and on the other side by the National Liberation Front.

^{xv} NLF was the largest resistance organization during the German occupation and was formed by the initiative of CPG. Greek People's Liberation Army was the armed branch of EAM.

^{xvi} Rizospastis was founded in 1917 in Athens by Petsopoulos and Yanio as the chief editor, and it had previously started publishing in Thessaloniki. Its initial ideological orientation was democratic and did not yet have a socialist or communist rhetoric, although its central theme was the working class. In 1919, it was titled as Socialist Newspaper and was considered the writing tool of CPG. Its course has several discontinuities, especially in the 1940s.

^{xvii} The magazine 'Nea Genia' expresses a 'leftist-oriented' ideology on sports, as it served as the writing tool of UPOY, which was the writing tool of CPG, as well as UPOY.

^{xviii} The abbreviation of UPOY in Greek is EPON, however, in this article, the English abbreviation UPOY is used. UPOY was created through the collaboration of illegal resistance organizations of young people in February 1943. It is the largest youth organization in Europe.

composition. It was suggested that since the revival of HAAA was inevitable, the clubs' encouragement for involvement in its administration might aim to transform HAAA' philosophy from within.

Furthermore, prompted by HAAA' first post-occupation event, the CPG noted a division between HAAA's administration and the athletes. Specifically, the CPG accused HAAA of failing to provide sports equipment, lacking a healthcare service, and neglecting athletes with tuberculosis, possibly alluding to UGA's significant emphasis on establishing a healthcare service. It also called for granting voting rights to athletes from all clubs, indicating a new dimension in administration ("The Fights of the Stadium", 1945, pp. 20-21). The CPG's focus on health committees might have been influenced by UGA's initiatives in this area. Through these articles, the magazine highlighted their alignment with UGA's demands, even if not explicitly stated. This convergence between the CPG and UGA did not appear accidental, as they seemed to share common ideological ground, expressing a progressive attitude compared to HAAA's conservatism. Founding members of UGA, such as Lamprakis, were part of the NLF, reflecting leftist and progressive ideas. UGA's claim that its members were accused by HAAA of being communists might have influenced the CPG's support for the ideologically aligned and progressive UGA through its publications.

According to 'Nea Genia' the cessation of HAAA' activities during the occupation was not perceived as serving national interests, as HAAA claimed, but as indifference towards the athletes' fate. The establishment of a health committee and the emphasis on meeting athletes' basic needs found 'Nea Genia' in agreement with UGA. It should be noted that the ninth point among UGA's 13 points refers to workers' sports and the need for 'expanding sports to the popular layers of the working youth', undeniably converged with the communist ideology ("Here is what We Want", 1945, p. 1). However, these are largely assumptions, and it is unclear whether the CPG actually supported UGA because it believed in its proper functioning or because it wanted to confront HAAA due to its inaction, or purely for ideological reasons. The latter claim gains particular significance considering that as early as the mid-1920s, the CPG adopted the directions of Sportintern, part of the Communist International. In the broader context of political propaganda, through various social events amidst the Interwar period, the Communist Party of Greece attempted to propagate its positions through sports, using dichotomous frameworks such as working-class/ bourgeois athletics (Lamprakis, 2015).

In December 1945, elections were held to establish the new administrative council of the HAAA. This event provided an opportunity for the CPG to express its support for UGA and its advocacy for a progressive change in sports. On 1 December 1945, 'Nea Genia' captures the party's concern regarding the formation of the new HAAA administration and the 'uprooting of the athletic fathers of the occupation who abandoned sports' ("Elections of HAAA", 1945, pp. 16-17). In its coverage of the elections for the new administrative council, 'Nea Genia' focused on the reaction of UGA representatives (such as Syllas and Lamprakis) to Rinopoulos' speech regarding the

justification for suspending HAAA activities. The newspaper reproduced Syllas^{xix} and Lamprakis's words, asserting that, 'thanks to HAAA's indifference, the sports community became the biggest provider for sanatoria. ("After the Elections", 1946, pp. 14-15). Simultaneously, 'Rizospastis' applauded the new HAAA administrative council and criticized the outgoing administration, stating that the new structure should strive for the development of mass sports, something that the previous one failed to do. Regarding the new administration, 'Rizospastis' mentioned that it would give lectures and promote sports as much as possible among the working masses, clearly aligning with the CPG's stance on sports and the UGA's viewpoint ("The World of Sports", 1946, p. 2). Furthermore, journalist Tasos Michailidis from 'Rizospastis', starting from the establishment of the new HAAA council and in subsequent editions, spoke commendably about HAAA, stating that it was moving in a progressive direction. The CPG's attitude towards the new administration seemed positive despite the new president, Nikolaidis, being the general secretary of the previous administration ("The World of Sports", 1946, p. 2; "Let the British", 1946, p.2). The election of Nikolaidis was perceived by the Communist Party of Greece as a progressive change, given his pro-Venizelist stance. Therefore, the CPG chose to support the new administration on certain ideological terms. This stance of the CPG may be related to the election of progressive figures and UGA members like Lamprakis to the new administrative structure of HAAA. Therefore, a more favourable attitude was apparent since both institutions were moving towards a progressive direction (Andreou, 2010, p. 27; "The Old Faction", 1946, p. 2).

The alignment between the CPG and UGA was obvious. The CPG, as a progressive party, embraced UGA's views and opposed the old administrative association of HAAA. The shift of the CPG in favour of the new administrative alliance following the inclusion of progressive members confirms the ideological differences between the UGA and the 'old HAAA'.

7. UGA and new forms of sports administration

The governance of the two sports organizations constituted another point of contention between them. As previously stated, UGA endeavoured to establish a network of athletes not only based on their athletic identity but also considering the societal circumstances that shaped athletes politically and socially. In essence, UGA's initiatives were not limited solely to the material support of athletes but also extended to their education. At the same time, UGA aimed to uphold athletes' rights and involve them in administrative affairs.

UGA's ambition to formulate a novel sports governance framework was evident even during the occupation, as reflected in the 'Athlitismos' newspaper. It noted that

^{xix} Nikos Syllas was the greatest Greek discus thrower in prewar as well as postwar period. He owned 14 victories in the Balkan competitions from 1932 to 1940 while his most significant victory was his 6th Olympic victory in Berlin in 1936.

UGA opposed HAAA, the supreme sports authority, as it sought to grant voting privileges to athletes 'and not treat them like horses in a race' (Misailidis, 1945, pp. 1-2). This expression underscored UGA's distinct administrative approach, which aimed to empower athletes in selecting their club's administration, contrasting with HAAA's perceived instrumental treatment of athletes. This aspiration was actualized through the 10 November 1943 decision, mandating clubs to extend voting rights to athletes. Moreover, the majority of UGA's thirteen points regarding sports management pertained to administrative issues.

Point one: Sports administrations should consist of recognized, dedicated sports enthusiasts who are technically proficient and include former athletes. Point two: Amendment of the statutes of sports clubs through legislation, allowing athletes to participate in the election of their governing board. Point four: Putting an end to the exploitation of sports, this means that sports should not be used as a means to promote personal or political interests. ("Here is what We Want", 1945, p. 1)

According to point one, UGA prioritized reinstating the core of administrative relationships, emphasizing not on individuals' social status but on genuine sporting passion. In combination with point four, UGA attempted to introduce a different philosophy of administration, one that prevented using administrative positions in sports for personal, social, or political advancement. The democratic and participatory administrative model embraced by UGA is evident in point two, advocating for athlete involvement in club administration. Within its short period of operation, UGA attempted to fundamentally change the philosophy of sports administration, even in that particular political context where the country was surrendered to Nazi Germans. Despite being a compulsory decision, only a handful of clubs implemented it (Misailidis, 1945, pp. 1-2).

This was apparent in the clash between Olympiacos President and HAAA's advisors Manouskos and Lambrakis. Lambrakis accused Olympiacos athletes of abstaining from voting in the club's administration due to the president's stance on the matter. He suggested that athletes refrain from participating in selecting the administrative composition of the club to avoid conflict with Manouskos (Lamprakis, 1945). The Lamprakis-Manouskos confrontation highlighted, on one hand, UGA's revolutionary drive to implement democratic ideals in administration and, on the other hand Manouskos' autocratic approach, denouncing the revolutionary way in which UGA operated and advising Lamprakis to focus on his expertise and not getting involved in administrative matters (Manouskos, 1945, p 2). Manouskos' rhetoric urging Lamprakis to refrain from sports administration may support Lamprakis' assertion that Manouskos prevented 'ignorant' athletes from participating in administrative affairs, suggesting that only administrative experts should be involved. Any other action was deemed revolutionary. This confrontation, fuelled by Manouskos' pressure on an Olympiacos player to compete despite the athlete's questionable health, reinforced Lamprakis' claim of Manouskos' support for the authoritarian decision-making process. Lamprakis' attack on Manouskos can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, they represented differing political orientations. Therefore, it is evident that progressive UGA advocated for a democratic

approach to administration, involving athletes in the electoral process, as they should not be excluded. Furthermore, this participatory form of administration that UGA was willing to legislate underscored its belief that athletes should play a role in decision-making process.

This stance posed a threat to HAAA, which seemed to favour more authoritarian administrative models making unilateral decisions and exerting control over individuals, among other practices. HAAA's top-down organizational approach, without athletes' involvement, further highlighted the ideological contrast between the two entities. It is noteworthy that during HAAA's elections for the new board, athletes participated for the first time, albeit without voting rights. Despite proposals, this was ultimately rejected ("After the Elections", 1946, pp. 14-15).

8. The athletes' attitude towards HAAA and UGA

The athletes' perception of the HAAA and the UGA was discernible through contemporaneous newspaper accounts. It can be posited that the progressive principles promoted by the UGA, exemplified by its approach to sports governance, stood in stark contrast to the authoritarian and conservative administrative methods employed by the HAAA, a contrast that resonated with athletes who implicitly endorsed the UGA. The disillusionment among athletes regarding HAAA during the occupation period and their appreciation towards UGA were palpable.

In November 1945, a contingent of nine athletes formed by the HAAA travelled to Istanbul for sporting competitions. Upon their return, the HAAA extended an invitation to a reception held in their honor. However, athletes Ioannis Lambrou, Nikos Syllas, Vasilis Mavrapostolos, Nikos Stefanakis, Stelios Stratakos, and Stavros Kostavaras staunchly declined to attend, citing that they encountered 'closed doors' during the occupation. Concurrently, they expressed their allegiance to the UGA, which provided support during the tumultuous occupation years (Lamprou et al., 1945, pp 16-17). Additionally, there are reports of athletes highlighting the inactivity of HAAA during and after the occupation, as articulated by Giannis Palamiotis.^{xx} He claimed that he trained in the fields due to the HAAA's neglect of athletics, alongside mentioning the dearth of sports equipment for sports such as hurdles and javelin throwing. The renowned discus thrower Syllas, further mentioned that he resorted to training with a piece of marble as the required equipment was not provided by HAAA ("Our Balcan Winner", 1945, p. 2). An indicative example of the situation is recounted in an article published in 'Athlitismos' on 21 April 1945, wherein athletes afflicted with tuberculosis, requested unsuccessfully support from the HAAA following the cessation of the

^{xx} Mavrapostolos and Stratakos were Balkan champions in running competitions. Kostavaras was an athlete in running competitions as well. Stefanakis was an athlete in hurling competitions. Lambrou engaged in various sports such as basketball and high jump. Palamiotis was a Balkan champion in long jump three times winning the Balcan golden award in the triple jump and fourth in the Paneuropean competition in Paris, in 1938.

occupation while acknowledging the contribution of UGA, which provided them with financial aid and support by any available means. They held the HAAA accountable and implored it to live up to their expectations ("The Tubercular", 1945, p. 2).

It appears that the UGA heeded the athletes' concerns, as evidenced by their appreciation for its efforts, particularly in contrast to the perceived shortcomings of the HAAA. The progressive ethos embodied by the UGA resonated with athletes who desired administrative reforms that prioritized the interests of Greek sports and its participants.

9. Assessment of the actions of HAAA and UGA

Through the Interwar period, both institutions espoused ideologies aimed at harnessing sports to accomplish diverse objectives. Amidst the German occupation of Greece, sports receded from the forefront of societal engagement. The suspension of HAAA's activities during this period, coupled with its antagonistic stance towards UGA, can be construed as adherence to a conservative viewpoint that tacitly endorsed the unequal distribution of power and advocated for a political framework that ensured stability and predictability. Conversely, UGA embraced a progressive outlook aligned with socialist principles, prioritizing the fulfilment of human needs and individual development for societal advancement. The ideological disparities between the two entities precipitated their discord. HAAA resorted to subversive tactics against UGA, including allegations of communist affiliation of its members and assertions of its illegitimacy lacking state sanction. On the other hand, UGA, in a defensive mode, attributed the decline of sports during the occupation and the acquiescence to the new political landscape to HAAA's actions.

Progressive elements within UGA, exemplified by figures like Lamprakis, who was associated with the National Liberation Front, elucidate the ideological consonance between UGA and socialist tenets. This alignment is echoed in the support extended by the Communist Party of Greece to UGA, juxtaposed with its antagonistic stance towards HAAA, as reflected in publications such as 'Rizospastis' and 'Nea Genia'. The dichotomy between the two entities was further underscored by the contrasting administrative paradigms they espoused. UGA advocated for a participatory management model, wherein athletes were afforded voting and candidacy rights in club governance, contravening HAAA's autocratic approach that excluded athletes from administrative affairs.

In summation, UGA endeavored to democratize sports by instituting democratic procedures in management selection, a pioneering attempt in sports governance that was deemed revolutionary, particularly amidst the occupation and the aftermath of the Metaxas dictatorship. Additionally, efforts were undertaken to promote athlete-led management and empower athletes themselves, which was reflective of socialist principles. Athletes, from their vantage point, welcomed UGA's organizational and administrative initiatives, often contrasting them favourably with HAAA's perceived

role in the organizational and administrative vacuum of the occupation years. They also acknowledged UGA's contribution, both in terms of organizational support and material assistance to athletes.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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