**Six Minutes in Berlin: Broadcast Spectacle and Rowing Gold at the Nazi Olympics,** Michael. J. Socolow, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2016, Pp. 273. $24.95 (paperback). ISBN 978-0-252-082214

The 1936 Berlin Olympics have been thoroughly examined by historians, but they have mostly focused on the heroic exploits of Jessie Owens and the exploitation of the games by propagandists within Nazi Germany. However, Michael J. Socolow departs from this well-trodden path by focusing on two aspects that have been obscured. *Six Minutes in Berlin* combines the twin narratives of the men’s eights rowing final and the revolutionary radio broadcasting developments employed at the 1936 Olympics, which became a model for all future sports broadcasts. Through this perspective, Socolow provides original insights and reflections on the significance of the 1936 Games as a dramatic spectacle in sports, media and social history.

Whilst rowing has been ever-present on the Olympic programme, the sport has generally been overlooked by scholars. However, this story of the victorious USA men’s eight, a crew of ‘blue collar’ undergraduates from Seattle is one that deserves to be brought to wider attention. Likewise in the age of satellite-enabled digital communications, we take for granted the ability to follow ‘live’ sports events from the other side of the world. However, before the technical advances in radio broadcasting that were pioneered by the Germans at the 1936 Games, and as exposed in this book, this communications experience was simply not possible. While acknowledging the propaganda value of the games, Socolow frequently acknowledges how Hitler looked to use them to project to the world a picture of a modern and progressive nation, but he also portrays how there was a *Wizard of Oz*-like deception if one looked behind the swastika-adorned curtain.

The story of the Washington State University crew gives us a glimpse into a different sporting age, far removed from the financially backed athletes of today. Indeed, it provides an insight into American society and sport in the 1930s set against the Great Depression. This is not a story of the privileged sons of the captains of industry who attended the famous Ivy League colleges of the East Coast. Instead, the nine young men had to fight adversity at every stage, from their upbringing, entering university, enduring the cut-throat selection process of making the Varsity Boat and then finally being chosen to represent their country at the Olympics. Even this honour was nearly taken away from them as the impoverished American Olympic Committee, operating in the middle of the Great Depression, insisted that each crew-member find $500 to be on the Olympic Team. Socolow describes how the population of Seattle rallied around and found the necessary financial support as an act of civic pride in ‘their’ crew. For those unfamiliar with the history of collegiate rowing, the book provides an insight into the elevated status of rowing and how it captured the public interest in the inter-war years before Basketball and American Football took over. Socolow provides us with an insight into the bond within the crew as he recalls how their stroke, Don Hume, the key member of the boat became unwell on the crossing and failed to recover and was almost scratched from the crew. His place was only saved by the incredible support of his crew who refused to race without him, but then adds how Hume produced a lifeless performance until 800m to the finish when he suddenly ‘came to life’ and how the boat powered through the water past the Oxbridge based British crew, the experienced Italians and the fanatically supported Germans in a desperate, but successful race to the line. This provided Hitler and the other high ranked Nazis who had come to see a demonstration of Aryan domination with further disappointment at the Games.

If this remarkable success story is not enough for one book, then the equally outstanding achievements of the German radio engineers are described as Socolow returns to his own field of expertise. For most scholars, it is the work of Leni Riefenstahl, and her classic documentary film *Olympia* full of Nazi symbolism that provides our knowledge of broadcasting outputs from the Games. The true legacy of the Berlin broadcasting has otherwise been overlooked in scholarship. In contrast, Socolow illustrates, but without ever becoming too technical for the novice student of radio history, how the complexity and volume of the radio broadcasting was an incredible technical advancement on all previous Games. This is supported by an account in *The* *New York Times* that quoted how the control centre and its transmitting and recording technology was "remarkable, unequalled and astonishing." Socolow's describes the importance of radio as a broadcasting medium in this pre-war and pre-television era and this technical homage is complemented with an insight into the nature of the rivalry between the CBS and NBC networks. Socolow illustrates how sports broadcasting rights had started to balloon and become a prestige factor between radio companies linked to advertising revenue and increased commercialisation. Despite the potential availability of increased and enhanced output from Germany and in contrast to today’s blanket coverage, US radio only had a limited amount of air-time permitted within the home radio schedules. This included only having a one hour slot booked for the Opening Ceremony missing the entrance of the teams, to focus on Hitler’s speech instead, while further scheduling issues meant American listeners missed live coverage of Jessie Owens’ long jump victory as priority was given to other non-sporting programmes. Finally, Socolow notes the significant difference between the content of the Games reporting between the US written and radio press. While the newspapers discussed religion and race and the threat of boycotts, there was no similar debated on the airways. Even the late replacement of two Jewish runners in 4x100 US team was only reported as a matter of fact but without any qualification or questioning. There is in Socolow’s work a suggestion that the announcers in Germany had almost ‘gone native’ and were divorced from the issues and concerns of the population back in America. However, they were, of course, operating with the controlling influences of the Nazi radio regulators and their masters in Goebbels’ Ministry of Propaganda, close at hand.

Unlike some previous scholars who are put off by Nazi connections the book does not shy away from the overtly political nature of the Games as a propaganda exercise but celebrates the huge technical achievements and developments. This includes the primary objective, showcasing German ingenuity, but it goes on to note how the city was dressed and cleaned for the Games. However, the presence of so many people in ‘uniforms’ as was noted by the rowing-crew and the inescapable radio broadcasts across the city, in the streets, the cafes and in the stations through strings of loudspeakers appears very Orwellian.

A potential weakness, for the social sports historian, given the incredible and unlikely biographies of some of the oarsman that I would have liked to have seen addressed was more research devoted to the members of the crew to give an insight into the nature of class, wealth and politics within collegiate sport in the 1930s. But otherwise, Socolow has produced an important piece of literature, filling in some missing gaps in the history of the Berlin Games in terms of an incredible sporting achievement, the spectacle and the broadcasting advancements. He has shown a significant level of praise for the German engineers but also conveys that the radio broadcasting collaborations unwittingly helped promote Nazi propaganda even if in reality the foreign broadcasters had little choice and that ultimately how the Games served a purpose quite unrelated to sport.

Paul Wheeler 2017

University of Chichester

p.wheeler@chi.ac.uk

http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08821127.2017.1309239