

## MAJOR J.G THULIN AND OTHER SCANDINAVIAN INFLUENCE ON FIEP: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

*"I prey to God, that the future doctors and educators may widen and improve my attempts: then the gymnastics could acquire the same kind of great significance for northmen as it had in Plato's, Hippocrat's and Galeni's mind."*

Stockholm, 1834 , Ling (1)

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, Dr. Carlos Vera Guardia, President of Pan-American Congress on physical education held in Colombia, Bogota in 1995 stated in his lecture entitled "Physical Education in Latin America and the Caribbean:"

In the case of physical education in the south cone, there is a very clear European influence with more educational gymnastics while the north and Caribbean show a more North American influence with the emphasis of sports", and as he specifies *"the original influence was from Sweden and German schools and then became more international or varied"*.

( 2 )

By looking back over *"the history of Physical Education in the world"* based on reports of 42 FIEP delegates collected by Dr. Pierre Seurin in 1961 (3) the reality of the original influence resembles that noted for the southern corner of Latin America in many countries as well and, furthermore, also in the other Scandinavian countries, neighbours of Sweden. Some special temporal and cultural-historical effects could also be discerned, but the general impression was clear, and *it might be assumed to be also have impacted FIEP action.*

This "Scandinavian influence" is still visible here and now, when we have gathered at the FIEP 2000 World Congress and 15<sup>th</sup> Annual International Courses organized by the Brazilian FIEP members on the theme "Education and Ecology". I will address questions concerning *Why, how and who* in my brief historical overview and evaluation.

Looking back at changes and developments which have taken place also in FIEP's action, *I recognised certain important periods, persons, leaders, who have made significant contributions to the work of the Federation, in accordance with its aims based on the scientific principles of which Per Henric Ling was the main originator (FIEP's statutes (1923), Article 1 and II) (4).*

*Particularly, the so-called "Swedish period" (1930-1958), when the Federation was run mainly by Sweden and 23 years under Major G.C. Thulin's direction (President from 1935-1958), was important for the general orientation and practical activities of our Federation as well as for co-operation between Scandinavian FIEP members. At that time, from 1930-1953, the official name of the association was La Fédération Internationale de Gymnastique Ling, ("International Federation of Ling Gymnastics, I.F.L.G.) and because of opposition within I.O.C. decided to devote all its energies to its specific education tasks (4).*

This article is mainly related this period, and reviews the strategies used for overcoming problems due to the two world wars and carrying out policies and practices which enhanced the quality of FIEP action and its expansion to cover the whole world.

*The main assumption in this evaluation inquiry, based on historical documents, is that the evolution of Ling's gymnastics under the influence of J.C. Thulin and the many other eminent Scandinavian P.E. teacher educators and leaders was reflected clearly in the development of the Federation and its widening impact through the organising of many important events, courses, conferences and spreading of "Neo-Swedish gymnastics" throughout the world. The *Lingiade I (1939) and II (1949) organised in Stockholm were recognised as turning-points in FIEP's history (4).**

*This presentation addresses first some perspectives on the context (Scandinavia), then the development of the structure of Federation changes in administration and organisation, its achievements in the practical and theoretical domains. The main characteristics of the "Neo-Swedish" and of "Finnish Women Gymnastics", as well as its well-known innovators and leaders Elli Björkstén (Finland-Swede) and Hilma Jalkanen (Finland-Finn), will be discussed and, finally, there will be a short description of a research project focusing on the longitudinal effects of this kind of gymnastics. ("Relationships between habitual physical activity - "the Finnish Women Gymnastics System" and functional capacity of middle-aged women", (Heinilä 1996). (5) It might be noted, that the sample of the particular study also included some participants of the second *Lingiade (1949)* and the 1952 Olympic games, the "demonstration group" of Helsinki University, under the leadership of Hilma Jalkanen - and that I was one of those elite gymnasts. Thus, my personal contact with FIEP started already fifty years ago and has continued, in the capacity of a FIEP delegate, from 1967 onward. I have been involved in educational tasks as a teacher, teacher educator and researcher at the University of Helsinki (1952-1957) and Jyväskylä (1971-1991), representing the fifth generation of PE teacher educated with the scientific principles of Per Henrik Ling. Thus, my experiences and perspective are culture-bound and my comments need to be evaluated for their relevance to other cultures.*

*My contact with Brazilian teacher educators and FIEP-members started twenty three years ago in 1976, in the Evaluation Congress organised at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland with the support and participation of FIEP (25), and continued in 1978, when I was invited by the Ministry of Education to give a course on "Evaluation, Didactic observation and Microteaching" at the University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (60 h). (26)*

*As Current International Vice-president of the FIEP, I hope that you will find this lecture a relevant contribution to this International FIEP 2000 World Congress with the theme "Education and Ecology", as well as an appeal to those present to work actively for assuring the success of future FIEP programmes that are devoted to its educational mission and its research agenda..*

## **2. CONTEXT - SCANDINAVIA**

### **2.1 Why has the Scandinavian influence on the FIEP been so remarkable?**

#### *Some cultural characteristics*

First, it is important to explain that although Scandinavia is commonly and in the title of this article referred as being one regional and contextual entity in terms of its socio-economic and cultural reality, it is not really the case. Due to historic, environmental, ethnographic and cultural factors, natural resources, industrialisation and immigration flows there are clearly differentiated sub-regions, with their own politics as well as developments of cultural history. *Today there are in Scandinavia five independent countries where FIEP has nominated its delegates at least 60 years back: Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland and Finland.* However, from the historical point of view, Finland and Iceland are quite new nation states, independent since the year 1917, whereas the concept of Scandinavia is an old one but still valid. For example, three years ago, there was in Nordic countries a major touring exhibition to celebrate the 600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Union of Kalmar (1397-) which went under the following name: "Margareta, the Ruling Lady, Monarch of Norden". It was supported and organised by the Nordic Council and Ministry Commission (National Museum of Denmark, 1997). *Relationships between Scandinavian countries have always been*

*close, particularly among academic circles, due to the shared hybrid language variant, "Scandinavian", understood in Denmark, Island, Norway, Sweden and also among Swedish-Finns.*

## **2.2 History of movement culture**

From the geographical, ethnic and movement cultural point of view, Scandinavia is unique: Finland is besides Iceland and Norway the northernmost country in the world. This fact influences the human behavior and movement culture. Physical exercise is older than schools; forms of physical exercise appear in all civilisations which possess a minimum of social structures both during meetings or parties and daily life (for defence, hunting, moving in different seasons, fighting) Looking at the Scandinavian FIEP delegates' reports from 1961 concerning the history of physical education in their countries, it can be seen that they all were unanimous that physical education has had a honoured place since the ancient times. The fight for daily survival required biophysical capacity and agility. As Erik Westergren (Sweden) stated: "In the epoch of "Vikings", 800-1000, there seems to have been strong athletes and "sages", who combined their body strength and vigor of spirit. The first ambition of every man was to have a able and robust hardened body. The Vikings had to fight glory and show bravery on the field of glory earn the right enter God' realm, Valhalla, after their death". (3,4)

In the Middle Ages there was a very clear Swedish influence in Finland which was a part of the kingdom of Sweden (until 1809), especially on higher level, advanced culture, such as religion, law, education and science. For instance, it was Christina, the Queen of Sweden, who founded the University of Turku (Åbo) in 1640. From 1809-1917 Finland was part of Russian empire, as a largely autonomous grand duchy, and this was reflected e.g. in the development of teacher training and the school's physical education. *External influence on the history of PE teacher education, however, came first from Germany and later from Sweden.* (10)

## **2.3 Stockholm as a Center of Teacher Training**

"From the beginning of the present century there were no international organisations in the area of physical education in Scandinavia, but *"there was a common feature in movement culture based on the ideology and scientific principles of Per Henrik Ling's, learned from teachers, and leaders studied them in many generations"*, as Olof Kihlmar states in his article, in the Nordic Gymnastics Federation 75<sup>th</sup> - Anniversary jubilee's review in 1995 (7). Stockholm (Sweden) was the cultural center in Scandinavia and especially in the area of the science of physical education and teacher education. There was the Royal Central Gymnastic Institute founded in 1813, where Per Henrik Ling (1776-1839) was the first director (1813-1839). He had the responsible duty to build up a gymnastic teachers education (8). *There started Physical education teacher training programs at the university level for men from 1834 and for women from 1864, whereas in the other Scandinavian countries about fifty years later - in Finland 1882- in Norway 1870, in Denmark about 1885.* RCGI was well-known in the whole Europe and outside, also in Latin America (9) in beginning of the 1900s. (3)

The principal founder of the scientific principles and philosophy, Per Henrik Ling was interested in and had deep knowledge of history, art, anatomy, physiology, and the law of the functions of the human body. Moreover, he was also a literary talent, engaged in literary activity (and got an academic award for this). He was also a poet, specialized in the history of movement culture and the old Viking's mythology. Physical Education in the 1800's also had very clear European influence on the Scandinavian scene which came from teachers visiting in different countries in Europe, such as Germany, Switzerland, Austria and France. *Moreover, an inherent feature of Ling's work was his attempt to tie gymnastics to medical science* (8). *This has had a definite influence on teacher education throughout the years;* e.g. in Finland, the Gymnastic Institute was subordinated to the medical faculty of the University of Helsinki until 1974, and so it has been in many other countries, for instance, Belgium (3) (10).

At FIEP's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary World Congress for physical education in Brussels 1973, Olle Hallden as the representative of G.C.I. gave in his lecture a good overview of "The origin of the Ling's system, and its development in Sweden" (8) Erik Westergren presented information on this

topic in his FIEP-report in 1961 in French (3,4). In these articles and also in many other reports presented at the congress (1973), *the evolution of Ling's gymnastics was the main issue.* (6)

## **2.4 Gender equality**

*In this area of cultural politics, the women are well represented in Scandinavia. The Finnish women were the first ones in Europe and the second ones (after New Zealand) in the whole world to achieve to full political rights in 1906. At present, the Scandinavian parliaments have the highest proportion of female MPs in the world: in Sweden 40.4%, in Denmark 33%, in Norway 39.4%, in Finland 33.5% and in Iceland 24.4%, whereas the respective figure in the whole world was 10-15%, according to a report by IDEA (IPU 1997, Stockholm). The tradition of systematic physical education for women has continued until now for almost a hundred twenty years, and it is the women themselves who have been in the leadership of this tradition. The first Gymnastic club for women was founded in 1876 by Elin Vaenerberg-Kallio, "mother of Finnish women gymnastics" - one year after his brother had founded the gymnastic club for men (10).*

## **2.5 Voluntary gymnastic Association in Scandinavian**

*The Swedish Gymnastics Association was founded in 1905 and the Nordic Gymnastics Federation 1919 (Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland). The initiator was probably the president of Swedish Gymnastics Association, Colonel Nerman, who was also FIGE President from 1924 - 1935. J.G. Thulin was president of the Swedish Gymnastics Association from 1915-1933 and also the president of the Nordic Gymnastic Association (Nordisk Gymnastik Förening, NGF) from 1931 -1952. In the meeting 1931, Thulin realigned NGF's work and organisation. In its plan were the following activities: congress, courses, sport camps in the Nordic countries, comparing and distributing new publications on gymnastics, and co-operation with the other Nordic organisations (7). Thulin founded in 1907 a well-known South-Sweden Gymnastics Institute – where until 1946 750 female PE leaders were educated (11). The Scandinavian Association for Women's Gymnastics was founded in 1921 and the Swedish Finn Elli Björksten acted as its president from 1921 – 1939 (17). The development of the association and co-operation between them and FIGE-F.I.G.L.-FIEP advanced quickly in the 1930s thanks to the activity of the following persons: Agnes Holmström, Elin Falk, Josef Thulin, Ernst Idla in Sweden, and Elli Björksten and Hilma Jalkanen in Finland, and Nils Bukh in Denmark. (3)*

## **3. THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF LING GYMNASTICS (I.F.L.G.), 1930-1953 AND SCANDINAVIAN INFLUENCE - FEDERATION UNDER "VIKING" LEADERSHIP**

### **3.1. Administration and changes in organisation**

The Scandinavian *influence* on the Federation was clear and can be recognised in its administration, organisation and in different areas of action. This "Swedish period", with two world wars, was run safely and rationally under the direction of Sweden: the president from 1930-1935 was Colonel Nerman and the Secretary General in 1930-1939 Berg Von Linde and from 1935-1958 the president was Major J.G. Thulin and the Secretary General was Major Olof Kragh from 1939-1958. (4)

*This period in the life of the Federation witnessed the organisation of many important events, conferences and the spreading of "Neo-Swedish" gymnastics throughout the world. Particularly notable were International events organised by the Swedish Gymnastic Association in Stockholm in 1930 and the Lingiads, the first organised before the war, 21 July - 4 August, 1939, and the second ten years later in 1949. The F.I.G.L. General Meeting took place on the 5<sup>th</sup> August 1949 and gathered delegates from 27 countries. In this Meeting it was decided to share responsibilities for a greater efficiency and to create three international sections within F.I.G.L.*

1. *The Scientific Section*, whose successive presidents in this period were: Professor Christensen (Sweden), Professor Erling Assmussen (Denmark)

2. *The School Section*, whose successive presidents were A. Thorson (Sweden), Uglas Thoresson (Sweden), Frode Andersen (Denmark)

3. *The "Sport for All" and "Voluntary Gymnastics" Section*, which was successively named "Recreative Branch 1955, "Work and Recreation Branch in 1963, "Voluntary Gymnastics" and Sport for All" Branch in 1973 - in accordance with the evolution of the main problems that this section had to deal with. Its successive presidents were Lilly Dufberg (Sweden), Olaf Kihlmar (Sweden), Erik Westergren (Sweden), Paul Högberg (Sweden) and once again Olaf Kihlmark, and since the General Meeting in Gdansk 1973 Lena Jensen (Sweden).

During the General Assembly at the World Congress in Istanbul in 2<sup>nd</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> August 1953, the Federation, following Major Thulin's proposals broadened its scope by adapting a new name "*Fédération Internationale de L'Education Physique*" (FIEP), (International Federation of Physical Education) - in order to stress the organization's universal character and doctrinal independence" as stated in its historical record 1973 (4).

### **3.2 About FIGL (FIEP) achievements and Scandinavian influence; conferences and International courses organized or patronized by the FIGL (FIEP) 1930-1958**

In this "Swedish period", F.I.G.L. was constantly organising various international activities including conferences and courses. Particularly worthy of note have been World Congresses, which brought together Congressmen and large groups of gymnasts to demonstrate new ideas and development of methods, adaptations for different groups, in front of international audiences and to discuss them, and organise courses in connection of these events. Some notable activities, from among nearly 25 events, conferences, courses and meetings organised or supported by the F.I.G.L.:

1930 – Stockholm, International Conference organised by the Swedish Gymnastic Federation (200 participants, 18 countries, 11.000 gymnasts in exhibition –teams / Sweden, Finland)

1931 Venice, Italy

1932 – International course, Lund

1933 Malmahed, 2<sup>nd</sup> International camp for top gymnastics with the same organisers. In addition to the Northern Countries - Sweden, Finland and Norway, Denmark and Iceland - six new countries were represented: England, Iraq, Scotland, Czechoslovakia, Germany and USA.

1935 – Brussels – International Conference (17 countries, 300 participants)

1939 – Stockholm, Sweden, 1<sup>st</sup> Lingiad (37 countries, 7300 participants)

1946 – Lillsved, Sweden, International courses, two-week courses which gathered 227 educationalists from 22 countries

1947 - Lisbon, Portugal – European Conference (9 countries represented, 140 participants)

1949 – Stockholm, Sweden, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lingiad, (60 countries, 60 lectures, 1450 participants, exhibition teams with 13.000 participants)

1952 - Bordeaux, France, 1<sup>st</sup> Latin Conference (4 countries, 268 participants)

1953 - Istanbul, Turkey – World Conference (29 countries, 150 participants, exhibition teams from Germany, Austria, Denmark, Egypt, India, Norway and Turkey)

1956 - Madrid, Spain, 2<sup>nd</sup> Latin Conference (12 countries, 200 participants, exhibition teams from Spain, France and Portugal)

1957 - International Course, Strasbourg, France (13 countries, 180 participants)

1958 - Brussels World Conference (35 countries, 800 participants, exhibition groups from West Germany (12), Austria (1), Belgium (9), Denmark (5), Finland (3), France (3), Italy (2), Portugal (4), Poland (1), Sweden (5), - 500 gymnasts and a group of 240 voluntary gymnasts (women 20 to 60 years old). (See appendix 1)

In the 1930' and 1940', most of the events, about 50%, were organised by Sweden whereas in the 1950' Federation Belge d'educacion physique, Belgium, and later France - Voluntary Gymnastic Associations (FFGEGV) - were the main organisers. The population of events expanded step by step to cover most of the European countries and after Lingiad also the Latin America countries. The exhibitions also broadened their scope, to embrace demonstrations of

different age groups, genders and levels of achievements. In the beginning of 1930s, the Scandinavian countries - Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Norway - were mostly represented in these conferences as delegates, gymnasts and participants, but already in 1933 there were six new countries (England, Scotland, Iraq, Czechoslovakia, Germany and USA) taking also part in courses organised for top gymnastics under the chairmanship of Thulin and Berg von Linde (secretary general).

*In addition Thulin and Kragh, in order to bring information about FIEP, made in 1951 (June-August) a mission tour to Latin America - Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela; professor Enrique C. Romero Brest stated at the FIEP 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Congress in Brussels: "Credit should be given to Swedish gymnastics for starting with the practice of gymnastics and putting the basic principles in evidence, which have been developed and adjusted afterwards to the new conceptions of man, life, and world" (9).*

Also many women took part in this marketing activity, and it might be noted that women were also the majority giving exhibitions and lectures but, however, delegates were mostly male and they also presented scientific reports. Thulin was usually the president of the organising committees of the international conferences and of the courses held in Sweden from 1930-1949, in Lund, Malmahed and Lillsved. It must be noted, however, that also many other acknowledged persons were involved in this action, as teachers and leaders.

*As Pierre Seurin stated, in summarising the reports of FIEP of the 42 FIEP delegates in 1961, "this "Swedish" period of our Federation witnessed the organisation of many important events, conferences, and the spreading of "Neo- Swedish" gymnastics throughout the world - thanks to the work of Maija Carlqvist, Victor Balck, Elli Björksten, Hilma Jalkanen, Niels Bukh, Elin Falk, Josef Thulin and others, and also under the influence of Laban, Bode, Medau (etc.) giving greater significance to rhythm, relaxation, total movement, games and sports" (3)*

*The educationists had the opportunity to discover the Neo-Swedish gymnastics trends and also the "Voluntary Gymnastics" movement and conception, and the necessity of grounding physical exercises on scientific foundation and to evolve them with Ling's principles. (Bulletin v. 44, 4, 1974, 26, 27-29) (4).*

### **3.3 Development of FIEP-Bulletin**

At the beginning of this period, a change in information activities started officially by the edition of the first issue of the Bulletin. It appeared in Swedish and French, in February 1931, it had 18 pages and it was edited by Berg von Linde. It has continued without interruption since then, also in war time (1940-1945), when the other activity was minimal. (4)

This is surely a record for an voluntary review in the area of "movement culture". At present, we can read FIEP-information from FIEP Bulletin volume 69. Bulletin no 1, 1931, featured "the FIEP's historical record" (1921-1930). Step by step the review developed and articles were published in English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Swedish and German. The list of the major articles from 1931-1973, considered the most significant with regard to the FIEP'S achievements and general policy and excluding conference and meeting reports as bibliographical references, is presented in FIEP Bulletin volume 44, October 1974, 35-44. Based on this information it can be recognised that the members of the IFLG administration and the president of the three international sections were very active, being main authors of the articles. Professor Christensen (Denmark) and professor Erling Asmussen (Denmark), the successive presidents of the scientific section of FIGL, discussed physiological aspects of physical education. It can be noted that, in this period, there were only a few articles written by women: Maija Carlqvist (Sweden), Hilma Jalkanen and Kaarina Kari (Finland), Doris Ainsworth (USA) and Jarmila Proksova (Czechoslovakia) were those unique contributors (5%). The following Dr. H.C. Thulin's articles represent well the general ideology and evolution of the Swedish gymnastics realised in this period: "Ling's system applied to modern gymnastics in Sweden" (vol. 2.,12: 1932, in French), "Modern Swedish Gymnastics" (vol. 6, 1936 also in French, Thulin and Kragh), "Some basic principles of Ling Gymnastics" (vol. 16.1, 1946 in French and English), "Utilization of rhythm in physical exercises" and "Gymnastics exhibitions and top gymnastics" (vol. 18,2.1948 in English and later in French), "Principles of postural gymnastics" (vol 19.1, 1949 in English, French and Spanish), "School gymnastics and

*postural deficiencies*" (vol. 21.1, 1951, in English) and in the same issue "*Purposes and achievements of the FIEP*", lecture in South America; in French, English and Spanish. Thus Sweden and the other Scandinavian countries were involved in scientific communication, change of topical information between eminent specialists throughout the world. This activity enhanced the quality of FIEP action and its expansion across the world.

### 3.4 FIEP scientific studies and research

#### *The FIEP "Thulin Prize"*

Thulin was also a great theoretician and scientist and he founded the "Thulin" Prize for the promotion of scientific study within the FIEP. The general meeting held on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July 1939 had already agreed to the principle of creating an "International competition of publications on P.E. theory. But this project was not carried out. The General Meeting held in Madrid 1966 took up the idea with new rules. The Thulin Prize was then founded with the following rules:

1. The Thulin prize is intended to reward, every fourth year, the best original publication on P.E. theory from a biological, pedagogical or technical point of view. To this end, Major Thulin H.C. Doctor of Lund University and former F.I.E.P. president, offered 5000 Swedish crowns (\$1.000 American) for making the medals to reward the winners)
2. The works, written in one of the F.I.E.P. official languages, with maximum of 500 typed pages of 25 lines per page and minimum of 400. The works are examined by a Jury composed as follows: The FIEP's president, the FIEP's Vice president, The General Secretaries, the FIEP's International Branches' president and a FIMS's representative (for works on biology)
3. Each competitor should submit 10 copies of his work eighteen months before the prize-giving day. In 1970 at the Lisbon Conference, the P.E. and Sport Department of the Portuguese Ministry of Education awarded the laureate a sum of 2.000 dollars as a contribution towards the publication of the book.

The "*Thulin*" Prize was awarded by the University of Lisbon to Dr. Herman Brandt (Switzerland) for his work: "*A Critical Scientific Study of Team Games: Tchouk ball*" (4).

This project was successful also for the integration of theory and practice. As the current FIEP president John C. Andrews, expert in this game newly has stated "*It led the invention and introduction of Tchouk-ball, a sport which has steadily gained in recognition as an excellent activity in school physical education programmes and as an attractive sport for all. FIEP has consistently supported the development of this sport since the Thulin Prize award and a number of FIEP delegates have been personally responsible for introduction the game in their country. This was a Prize and a Winning study with very tangible results*". (11)

The second research project of Thulin was the evaluation of school physical education connected to the phases of physical education in 1955-1958. Thulin made an appeal to all specialists to let him know their point of view upon the fundamental *problems*. The answers of 15 persons were published in following reviews (No. 2-1956, no. 1-1957, no. 2-1957 and no. 1-1958) and they informed about problems in the following 11 countries: Czechoslovakia (2), Cuba, Belgium (3), Argentina, Finland, Norway, Italy, Portugal, Mexico (2), Hungary and West Germany. (4)

### 4. CHARACTERISTICS OF THULIN'S PERSONALITY - AS IT APPEARS IN DIFFERENT DESCRIPTIONS

As Dr. Doris Willard Plewes from Canada, Director of Physical Fitness, Department of National Health and Welfare, Ottawa, Member of FIEP International Council, FIEP delegate wrote in her tribute to J.G. Thulin on his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 1955:

*"Major Thulin's contribution to the literature of Physical Education and his research in related areas of interest have quality which have earned him an outstanding reputation. To mention only one of the many, his "GYMNASTIC ATLAS", provides a visual dictionary of human movement which is doubly valuable in countries whose language lacks a definitive terminology in this field, and*

dedicated to his mission, inspirational in his association, Major Thulin has indeed full-filled the hopes of his illustrious predecessor Per Henrik Ling" (12) (p. 19-20)

*Thulin's influence on the quality of physical education and FIEP's action was longlasting. As Thulin's fellow-countryman Olof Kihlmark, long-time president of the FIEP Recreation and Sport for All section, writes: "Again, we meet the results in his books. Even if development of Gymnastics progressed quickly, since Major Thulin last expressed himself in writing, we are continually finding pearls of wisdom in his works. If we judge them by attitudes of the period, when they were published, they are still unsurpassed in many ways". And, as he summarised Thulin's influence summarising his tribute: "As president of the Gymnastic Association of North and of (1955) the FIEP (formerly the F.I.G.L.), he has worked for many years for a world-wide encouragement of physical education, particularly of Swedish gymnastics."* (12) (p. 46)

Looking at the bibliography, concerning Thulin, there can be found the following statement: "From the beginning of 1900, Thulin has been the "founder" in the Swedish gymnastics" (p. 943). (24), and as Westergren, a FIEP delegate, wrote in 1961 in giving the report on Physical Education in Sweden: "Josef Thulin is after Per Henrik Ling the most important personality of Swedish gymnastics (3,4). Thus, based on the results of this inquiry into the FIEP history, and tributes presented by FIEP members to J.G. Thulin on his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday 1955, we can feel assured that Thulin has fulfilled "the hopes of Per Henrik Ling" - as a good "northerner".

## **5. RESEARCH WORK CONNECTED TO THE EVALUATION OF THE LONGITUDINAL EFFECTS OF "MODERN FINNISH WOMEN'S "**

*The relationship of habitual physical activity - The Finnish Women's gymnastics - with the functional capacity of middle-aged women is a large research project aimed at the investigation of the impact of "life-long" physical exercise on the functional capacity of women aged 50-60 years and it has been carried out at the University of Jyväskylä, the Department of Sport and Health Sciences and the Foundation for Promotion of Physical Culture and Health (1985-1993) with contributions by Eino Heikkinen, Terttu Parkatti, Taina Rantanen, Laura Jaakkola, Liisa Heinilä et. al. (Heinilä 1996)*

For this study the women were selected on the basis of their habitual physical activity and educational background. A total of 112 women were studied in the laboratory. The final four groups and group sizes were as follows: (1) University education, physically active, n=32 (27 of them PE teachers and elite gymnasts in Lingiad 1949 and the Olympic Games 1952: students of Hilma Jalkanen; (2) University education, sedentary, n=23 (teachers); (3) vocational education, physically active (members of women's gymnastics clubs, n=26; (4) vocational education, sedentary, n=31. The levels of certain physiological, psycho-physiological and psychological functions were measured. Information on lifestyles, status of health as well as information on self-perceptions of health and functional capacity was collected by a postal questionnaire.

The results of this study project published in congress proceedings and articles of research journals showed that physical activity and educational background were both related to functional capacity among this middle-aged women population engaged with "Finnish Women's Gymnastics" for 26-36 years. *Thus, the system of the "Finnish Women's Gymnastics" education has received scientific evidence of its potential and quality. Moreover, the FIEP action has got longitudinal scientific evidence of its quality in the period covered in the present inquiry and throughout fifty years after the Lingiad 1949 (5)*

### **5.2 Modern Finnish women's gymnastics– A methodological interpretation of Ling's principles**

According to Elna Kopponen, head teacher of women's gymnastics at the Gymnastic Institute of Helsinki University (1959-1972), honorary doctor of the University of Jyväskylä and sponsor of this study project has said: "By modern Finnish Gymnastics for women we mean physical education for women. The tradition of systematic physical education for women has continued now for almost a hundred years, and it is the Finnish women themselves who have been in the

leadership of this tradition. In Finland the training of women gymnastic teachers, by women, goes back to the year 1872" (13, 14).

The system for women, which was used in the beginning of 1900s, so-called, the "Ling System" was developed in Finland by pioneering, eminent, teachers, Swedish-Finn Elli Björkstén (1870-1947) and later by her student Hilma Jalkanen (1889-1964), successive head teachers of gymnastics for women at the University of Helsinki from 1916-1938 and 1938-1958, respectively. Their influence on the evolution of "Swedish gymnastics" happened contemporarily with Josef Thulin's work, and the main issues discussed were similar, as can be recognised by comparing the original information and scientific studies connected to the evolution of the Ling's gymnastics, made eg. by Dr. Antonio Leal d'Oliveira – the successor of Thulin as the FIEP president (1958-1970) (12,15,16) and Dr. (H.C.) Elna Kopponen and Lic. Eija-Leena Wuolio (10).

Elli Björkstén trained first as a teacher of gymnastics in Elin Asp's Institute in Helsinki (1889-1890), taking a one-year course of German gymnastics, Spiess method. Elin Asp and Waenerberg-Kallio (23), studied also at the Royal Central Gymnastic Institute in Stockholm (1879-1881) and Elli Björkstén (1890-1893). From her earliest years as teacher Elli Björkstén took a leading role in the Helsinki Gymnastic Association, and acted also as the teacher of demonstration teams at the festivals held in Finland every year. *Her work became more generally known after the Olympic games in Stockholm 1912, and demonstrations by her students evoked widespread interest.* Since the formation of the Scandinavian Association for Women Gymnastics in 1921 she was its president until 1939. She held courses in Scandinavian countries every year from 1922 and also in England in 1933. Elli Björkstén's book, "Principles of Gymnastics for Women and Girls" (part I, 1918 and II, 1923) has been translated from the original Swedish into Finnish by her student Hilma Jalkanen (1920-1926) and into Danish, French, Polish and English (English translation in 1934 was done from the revised, almost entirely rewritten, second Swedish edition, 1932). (17)

*In 1930 Elli Björkstén was invited to become Honorary member of The Ling Association. She also received official recognition in Scandinavia, and recognitions were been awarded her by the President of the Republic of Finland (1949) and the King of Denmark and the King of Sweden (17).*

*Also Hilma Jalkanen received the following official Scandinavian recognitions , - Sude-Sweden Gymnastics Associations Ling-plaque of merit (1937); The Gymnastic Association of Köpenhamn plaque of merit 1949; the King of Sweden Gustaf V, Ling-plaque (1951) and she was invited as an honorary member of G.C.I. Stockholm in 1963; the President of the Republic of Finland awarded her with the highest plaque of merit, Finnish Sports Great Cross (1963) (21).* The present author received the FIEP Ling Honour Cross which was presented in 1970 by Antonio Leal d'Oliveira. The innovations introduced by Elli Björkstén and Hilma Jalkanen were noted with interest in Scandinavia, England and later throughout the world - as can also be verified in the reports of FIEP delegates (1961) and in summarising conclusions made by Pierre Seurin. (3) Elna Kopponen, elev of Elli Björkstén continued this development and mission work.

Finnish women's gymnastics is a familiar concept outside Finland as well (eg. FIEP Conference 1930, Lingiad 1939 and 1949, the Olympic Games 1912, 1936, 1952 and courses and demonstrations (also in FIEP) all over the world -1993).

The present author was also invited to teach Finnish women's gymnastics after Lingiad at the Ecole Normale Supérieure d'Éducation Physique pour jeunes filles à Chatenay-Malabry, Paris, France in 1952 and Hilma Jalkanen in 1953. The special character of "Modern Finnish Gymnastics for Women" lies in the very fact that, using new means, they created a relaxed, living posture in place of former tense, mechanical movements. In short, we aspire in this modern gymnastics to a natural harmony of movements, to mastery of the whole body, to correct breathing, to self-expression, with less difficult as well as with more complex movement series. The constructive exercises include separate exercises to develop the flexibility, strength, and neuro-muscular co-ordination of different parts of the body. This movement deals with the whole range of movements of the whole body to develop capacity for harmonious, dynamic and expressive movements; strength and endurance; skill in particular manoeuvres; good natural posture; correct breathing; mental and physical "poise"- and finally, the feeling of joy in life and movement (19). As Hilma Jalkanen (1961) wrote: "Those persons have "poise" who have developed their spiritual, mental and physical qualities fully in accordance with their potentialities..." (22) "Dynamic total motion

founded on organic basic gymnastics refines the physical and mental resources. The rhythm and aesthetic aims of gymnastics bring a relaxing sense of joy and pleasure. It is not dancing, but it may also lead to dance-like expression. The femininity of this style pleases the modern girl and young woman, and the refreshing delight it offers attracts persons of all ages. During the past years the mature age classes in particular i.e. women between the age of 40 and 80, have discovered its power of preserving youthfulness, health and an optimistic attitude to life" in Finnish Women's Physical Education Associations (SNLL's) information bulletin. One of the primary objectives of this Association (grounded in 1897) is to develop and maintain good health among Finnish women of all ages.

The study reported here has an enclosure with a film which presents the exhibition of the demonstration group in Lingiad 1949 directed by Hilma Jalkanen and the results of the longitudinal research project connected to evaluation of the functional capacity of elite gymnasts 38 years later.

## Conclusions

Some central topics on the Scandinavian influence on the FIEP's action during the so-called Swedish period (1930-1958), when it was run mainly under the direction of Sweden, and on the other Scandinavian neighbours have been analysed and evaluated in this review of historical documents. Summarising the results, the following factors were found to be of importance for the development of the Federation, evaluated by using as criterion the FIEP statutes (1923), Article 1 and 2.

**Firstly**, contextual factors – geographical, historical and cultural - were reflected on the action of the Federation. There was a "common" feature in movement culture, based on the ideology and principles of Per Henrik Ling, learned from teachers and leaders who studied them in many generations, and it formed a good ground for the development of the young federation. *Also the culture politics, co-operation at the university level, and between voluntary Associations, formed the second significant factor for the Scandinavian influence on FIEP and the third factor was connected to the history of women's liberation and independence in developing their own gymnastics and willingness to co-operation.*

**Secondly**, the *evolution of the "Swedish Ling gymnastics"* under the influence of Thulin, and in co-operation with many other acknowledged pioneers in gymnastics, as also in the Modern Finnish women gymnastics, eminent innovators succeeded well and the quality and reputation of the leaders and innovations is well-known even today. Special interests of particular professional groups has been connected to this evolution and this had led to the development of different interpretations of "Neo Swedish" gymnastics.

**Thirdly**, Thulin was an excellent person to lead FIGL through its first steps and obstacles. The Federation developed its structure and broadened its scope to *cover science, schools and voluntary gymnastics. The achievements of these branches reflected positively on the FIEP action. Furthermore, through many events and mission tours, the Federation expanded across the world.*

**Fourthly**, the *FIEP Bulletin started at the beginning of this period (1930)* and has continued without interruption since then, which is undoubtedly a record for an international review. Moreover, it developed step by step and the articles were published in many languages.

**Fifthly**, the Thulin prize founded for the *promotion of scientific study of FIEP. Results of scientific research connected e.g. to games, Tchouk-ball proved the influence of new ideas. Similarly, the study of the relationship of habitual physical activity, studied using The Finnish women's gymnastics system as a case, to the functional capacity of the middle-aged women have supported the quality and tangibility of the physical activity based on Ling's principles. Thus, also FIEP activity can refer to scientific foundations to demonstrate the value of its commitment to science-based activity.*

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