



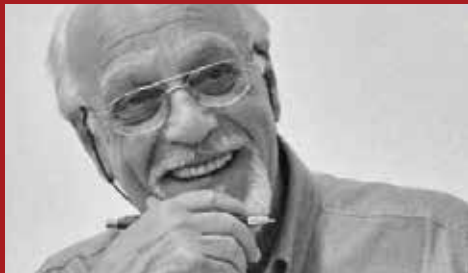
DIONYSSIS GANGAS

# OLYMPIC MOVEMENT & INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

**A confrontational coexistence over time**

Preface

Prof. Stelios Perrakis



Dionyssis Gangas was born in 1943.

In 2011 he completed a rich in experiences, 40year legal and academic career.

An experienced tennis athlete, he got involved in the Olympic Movement since his first term at the Hellenic Olympic Committee in 1985. In 1993 he was elected HOC General Secretary and in 1996 he was appointed Head of the International Relations in the Athens 2004 Bid Committee for the Olympic Games. In 2000 he took over the Division of International Relations in the Organising Committee, a division that comprised the relations of the Committee with the IOC and all the Members of the Olympic Family.

He was CEO of the Mediterranean Games Bid Committee for Volos 2014, while from 2009 to 2017 he worked as Management, Organisation and Education Advisor at the International Olympic Academy.

Since February 2019 he has been IOA's Development Projects Consultant.

At the same time, he teaches "International Relations and the Olympic Movement" at the Master's Degree Programme in Olympic Studies of the IOA.

He is a member of the Culture and Olympic Heritage Commission of the IOC and was awarded the IOC "Olympic Order" and the EOC "Olympic Laurel" for his outstanding services to the Olympic Movement.



INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC ACADEMY





# Olympic Movement and International Politics

A confrontational coexistence  
over time

Preface

Prof. Stelios Perrakis

By

Dionyssis Gangas

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International Olympic Academy  
52, Dimitrios Vikelas Avenue  
152 33 Halandri – Athens, GREECE  
Tel.: +30 210 6878809-13, +30 210 6878888  
Fax: +30 210 6878840  
E-mail: [ioa@ioa.org.gr](mailto:ioa@ioa.org.gr)  
Website: [www.ioa.org.gr](http://www.ioa.org.gr)

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*To my loving family*

# Contents

By way of introduction ..... 9

## PART ONE

1. Ancient Greece: From “physical education” to the “Olympic athlete” ..... 21

2. Coubertin’s Olympism ..... 26

3. An initial overview of the problem ..... 35

4. Political motives and political intervention in sport..... 45

5. Why were the Olympic Games an attractive platform for political  
and/or ideological exploitation? ..... 51

6. Classifying international political interventions ..... 53

7. Sport and politics in the Interwar years ..... 60

    In the US... ..... 61

    In Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy..... 63

    In the Soviet Union... ..... 66

8. The IOC’s intervention of “political” nature affecting the Games  
and the Movement..... 69

    The IOC’s positive intervention ..... 70

        a. The “two Germanies” ..... 70

        b. The “two Chinas” ..... 77

        c. The “two Koreas” ..... 84

        d. “Ping-pong diplomacy” ..... 91

        e. The South Africa Case ..... 94

    The IOC’s negative intervention..... 104

9. The Olympic Movement in the turbulent times of the Cold War ..... 108

10. Provoking the Olympic Movement ..... 113



11. Boycotting the Olympic Ideals .....	118
12. Terror over the Rings .....	123
13. Olympic Movement and Human Rights .....	131
14. The Olympic Movement as a soft power in the context of international diplomacy.....	142
15. The IOC as an equal interlocutor with UN and EU.....	151
16. The International Olympic Truce: From theory to practice .....	156
17. The Autonomy of the Olympic Movement.....	168

## PART TWO

<b>Olympic Games with political ramifications .....</b>	<b>183</b>
18. Coubertin's Olympiads.....	184
Athens 1896: Revival of the Games .....	186
Paris 1900: First disappointment.....	189
St. Louis 1904: Second disappointment .....	191
London 1908: Steps forward.....	193
Stockholm 1912: Clouds around the Rings.....	197
19. The Inter-Wars Olympiads.....	200
Antwerp 1920: Is "punishment" among the Movement's prerogatives?.....	201
Paris 1924: Beams of hope .....	202
Amsterdam 1928: High sporting culture.....	204
Los Angeles 1932: A different view of the Games .....	204
Berlin 1936: The defeat of a major ideological provocation.....	207

20. The Olympiads of the New World..... 213

    London 1948: Consequences of a war..... 215

    Helsinki 1952: Newcomers to the international sports map ..... 218

    Melbourne 1956: Emergence of the Cold War ..... 220

    Rome 1960: Third World appearance ..... 223

    Tokyo 1964: Last Games of innocence ..... 225

21. The Olympiads of challenges..... 226

    Mexico 1968: “Silent gesture” and activism on the podium ..... 227

    Munich 1972: Terror over the Olympic City ..... 234

    Montreal 1976: First serious boycott ..... 242

    Moscow 1980: Punch at the underbelly of Olympism ..... 245

    Los Angeles 1984: Ludicrous reprisals ..... 251

    Seoul 1988: Political dipole ends..... 257

22. The Olympiads of the New Era ..... 259

    Barcelona 1992: Dawn of a new era for the Olympic Movement ..... 260

    Atlanta 1996: Too much noise for nothing..... 262

    Sydney 2000: Clean Games ..... 263

    Athens 2004: Back home ..... 264

    Beijing 2008: Controversial choice ..... 269

    London 2012: Tranquility ..... 271

    Rio de Janeiro 2016: The Movement in the middle of an introversion turbulence . 272

    Tokyo 2020: In the midst of the pandemic ..... 276

As an Epilogue ..... 279

BIBLIOGRAPHY ..... 285

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I would also like to thank my friend and colleague, the distinguished Professor Stelios Perrakis, with whom I am united only by beautiful memories from our common course at Panteion University, who willingly wished to preface my work.

And finally, many thanks to IOC - TOML, for the courtesy of the photos accompanying the text.

I sincerely hope this book will help the thoughts and give some answers to the concerns of every reader who is interested in the many facets of the Olympic Movement.

The comments and conclusions in the text below express obviously my own views and are certainly open to any criticism!

I hope the text that follows will further assist my students and other readers interested in the course and the challenges of the Olympic Movement has faced towards International Politics.

Dr Dionyssis Gangas



## **Olympic Movement and International Politics: A confrontational coexistence over time.**

Preface by **Stelios Perakis,**

Professor Emeritus of International and European Institutions

Panteion University, Athens

The work presented by Dionyssis Gangas in the following pages has drawn his attention from the outset of his life and has been his source of inspiration for years as the Olympic Movement is a unique opportunity for a solemn declaration and manifestation of the universal human values of peace, dignity, tolerance, diversity, dialogue and synergy. The book is a narrative of his personal journey spanning 40 years of active engagement in the Olympic Movement, with moments of critical introspection, but also, above all, outward observation of its international field of operation, action and development - in other words, where the principles, but basically the policies of States, international organizations, the Olympic Movement and other international players are expressed and tested in practice. The author's sole aim was not to simply provide an academic handbook or a contribution to those involved in Olympic affairs, or even the experts in international policy in relation to popular global sport – but rather something broader and loftier.

The book is written in the first person, a “confessional” narrative that runs the full gamut of emotions and styles – piercing, angry, romantic, almost “tender” and tolerant. It radiates the serenity of the unique landscape of the Academy in Olympia and the certainty of the experienced veteran in an ongoing “race”. He attempts this with the clarity and passion for which he is generally known in his communication

with young people at university, in society and in the Olympic Movement, whilst also expressing concern about what he has lived through and what the future holds.

Dionyssis Gangas is certainly passionate about sport and the Olympic Movement. His background as an internationalist and thus a supporter of an international legal order helps him in this task. It is no coincidence that the United Nations Charter and the Olympic Charter are based on – convergent – universal values for Man, Peoples and Humanity. And of course, the views of the university teacher have influenced/strengthened his “Olympic” views not only in theory, but above all in practice. He allows his knowledge – and apprenticeship – of the Olympic Movement whose Principles and Values he has served to unfold without glossing over any negative elements that intercede – doping, economic interests, interventions, corruption, politics – which greatly afflict it and, in some cases, whose impact disrupts the international community (see Olympic boycott, terrorist acts, etc.). Its depiction is no easy matter, because it carries with it the risk of the narrator falling back into a one-sided approach. However, he does not attempt in this endeavour to reduce the tension within the friction or to embellish the *conflicting coexistence* – as he defines it –, the difficulties and the fluctuations in the relationship between politics and Olympic matters.

One of the most interesting areas of international relations is precisely the relationship/meeting point of the Olympic Movement with international policy. There, in the field of Universal Sport, States or individuals attempt to promote elements of international policy, with disagreements/claims and even rifts with political ramifications, because of the unique profile of the Olympic Movement, the Olympics and the interest of international public opinion.

On the other hand, the Olympic Movement, by definition, sets Values to Rights – Principles of peaceful coexistence, tolerance, respect for diversity, dialogue and does not “engage in politics”. Not that it is apolitical, as ever since the Coubertin era the Olympic Movement’s presence and action generates politics, from including or removing a sport from the Olympic Games program to selecting the city/country that will stage the Olympic Games, or promoting the joint appearance of North and South Korea at the Games or including a team of “refugees” amongst the contestants etc. In its autonomous and distinctive course, the Olympic Movement is independent, outside the jurisdiction of international law, subject only to its own rules, developing and shaping a *sui generis* law, which is binding for all the subjects of the international community which must respect it, even though they did not produce it. This is regardless of the relationship between the Olympic Movement

and the IOC on the one hand, and the United Nations and other international organizations (European Union, Council of Europe, etc.) on the other hand.

As a major social/cultural/political event and an established situation, the Olympic Movement suffered the consequences of political interference by State and non-State actors. It is not by chance that even the "Olympic Truce", as an expression of a classic institution, is being put to the test and unfortunately is not being adopted during the "Games". More generally, international policy considerations have affected and continue to affect the Olympic Movement through time, and the behaviours of individual members expose the IOC to criticism.

The reader of this book will find in its pages interesting references to each stage of the Olympic Movement's development, from 1896 to the present day and its consolidation in the international arena as an autonomous international actor with a special legal status. Additionally, information is provided for each Olympiad and, of course, for the Athens Olympic Games (2004), in the successful bidding, organization and conduct of which Dionyssis Gangas played an important role.

This synthetic evaluation allows not only an authentic record and useful documentation but also an evaluation of the results. In the light of this finding, particular attention should be paid to the author's thoughts in the introduction and the conclusions of his study. He ends his book with a set of comprehensive yet sobering conclusions. He advocates in favour of the inclusion of "Purus" and "Humanus" to the famous "Citius, Altius, Fortius", this being a requirement of modern civil society, in the sense of international community as humankind. A visionary perspective, highlighting his deep-rooted humanist approach and deep concern about the present and future of the Olympic Movement.

### **By way of preface...**

Almost 45 years have passed since I first became active in the Olympic Movement and during this period there were many instances when I had to face dilemmas related to how Olympism can formulate rules and values that will affect the daily lives of each and every one of us in this modern society. I have always been fascinated by these simple values and have seen them time and again come into conflict with the harsh reality on the ground in an endless struggle between “what should be” and “what actually is”.

When I experienced the Olympic Family up close, as Secretary General of the Hellenic Olympic Committee and member of the Executive Board of the European Olympic Committees under the Presidency of Jacques Rogge, and even closer as a member of the bid team for the Athens 2004 Olympic Games and Secretary General of International Relations of the Organising Committee, I clearly saw the abyss between “what should be” and “what actually is”!

However, this did not disappoint me, instead it made me an even more passionate advocate of the social philosophy of Olympism and I consciously joined the ranks of those who labour to apply its values through the education process. In the narrow scope at my disposal through teaching at the International Olympic Academy, I consider it necessary to look into the most classic form of conflict between what should be and what actually is, all that emerges between the rules of the Olympic Movement and the expediciencies of the international political scene.

Indisputably, there are other conflicts that attract attention, such as doping and the commercialisation of sport, where the above dilemma takes on a more personal nature, where it centres on the athletes themselves. However, I was trained as a lawyer and this pushed me to examine the conflict between the Olympic Movement and political expediciencies and to convey my experiences to the next generation.



Often, in the course of this educational process, I found myself facing matters of conscience and I cannot hide the fact that the way certain students and colleagues approached issues has troubled me greatly. For this reason, instead of trying to impose my academic viewpoint, I have always strived to explain, in a comprehensible manner, the milieu in which we are called upon, each of us individually, to define and to characterise an act or tactic adopted in each instance by the “players” who take part in this game of conflict between implementing the Olympic rules and political expediency.

Indeed, is it really so important who wins and who loses in this game? Many would answer that it is not important, as finally winners in a conflict impose their viewpoint. Is this the case, however? Regardless of the progress of the game and its outcome, do some ideas remain powerful and unaltered through time? Possibly, whatever our lifestyle is in this globalised world, can these ideas act as a safety net, protecting us through the diverse challenges we face in an international setting? Can these values gradually gain ground and be assimilated by opinion makers, allowing us to experience a better future? A romantic view of events, you might say! Hopefully, by the end of this treatise, you will come to see that there are grounds and reasons for hope.

The purpose of writing this treatise is to enable students in the Postgraduate Programme in Olympic Studies, organized by the International Olympic Academy and the Department of Sports Organisation and Management, University of Peloponnese, to follow with greater ease the relationship that exists between the Olympic Movement and its political exploitation, a subject that contains many unique features. My aim is to present some “facts” and “thoughts” on this relationship, without the slightest intention of imposing them.

In ancient Athens gymnastic or equestrian competition was a public, prestigious activity, and the building / administration of athletic facilities was a major civic responsibility. Thus, sport had a political potential, which was recognised by politicians and athletes who were motivated by the same challenge-seeking spirit of *philotimia* (love of honour). However, when sport and politics became specialised activities, Athenian political leadership shifted from being direct participants to become benefactors and administrators of athletics. In early Athens, both politics and athletics were dominated by the hereditary, propertied aristocracy. Nobles competed in gymnastic and equestrian events and went on to compete for civic leadership. By the 4th century BC, Athenian athletes and politicians had come to realise that with increasing specialisation in both areas, success could be attained

through direct participation in only one area. Although athletics remained a significant part of civic life, direct or indirect involvement no longer had overtones for political leadership (Kyle, 1980).

In the Games of 416 BC, Alcibiades of Athens fielded three teams in one of the most prestigious Olympic events, the quadriga.<sup>1</sup> The teams finished in 1st, 2nd and 4th places (or according to some sources 3rd place). Such a sweep was unprecedented in ancient Olympics. Equally noteworthy were the multiple repercussions of Alcibiades' Olympic performance. His ostentatious victory in those Games was the highlight of his sporting career. In the speech that Alcibiades himself delivered in the popular assembly in Athens before the disastrous Sicilian expedition in 415 BC, he attempted to persuade the Athenians to ratify his campaign plan and elect him as chief commander of the expedition. In order to achieve this objective, he openly advertised his recent Olympic victory and claimed that he was a worthy leader of Athens because: *"...of the magnificence with which I represented it [i.e., Athens] at the Olympic Games the Greeks assumed our city to be even greater (hyper-dynamy) than it really is..."* (Papakonstantinou, 2003, p. 174).

The Games rapidly conquered the world as a spectacle. Due to the immense impact they had on citizens' daily life, they were powerfully manipulated in order to promote goals other than those for which they had initially been established. The political exploitation of the Games is not something new and it is useful in each instance to investigate what conditions must exist in order to observe this connection; or should we call it correlation?

A superficial glance is enough to show that very seldom has sport been free of politics. Certainly, when Baron de Coubertin founded the modern Olympic Games, he did not see sport as completely free of politics. On the contrary, he hoped that sporting activities might improve political relationships between nations. In January 1894, he addressed a circular to the governing bodies of sport of France expressing the hope that every four years the athletic representatives of the world might be brought together and that the spirit of international unity might be advanced by the celebration of their chivalrous and peaceful contests. If sport were to influence politics, it could hardly be conceivable that such interaction would be in one direction only and that politics would have no bearing at all on sport.

Coubertin had fully accepted the fact that politics would be present throughout the evolution of the modern Olympic Movement. At the General Assembly held in Berlin, in 1909, he emphasised: *"For once, the International Olympic Committee*

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1 Chariot drawn by four horses abreast.

*agenda contained nothing the least bit political. The Stockholm Olympic Games programme in 1912, on the one hand, and the examination of the concept of amateurism, on the other, gave the agenda of the General Assembly a purely technical character...*"<sup>2</sup> Of course, at that time he could not have imagined that the concepts of amateurism and professionalism in sports could not be limited for a long time to the "technical character" attributed to them, since the latter would evolve very rapidly in the years to come and would be a useful condition for the political exploitation of the Games.

Reid and Evangelidou (2010) aptly observe that, reading the Olympic Charter, one might get the impression that the Olympic Movement views itself as apolitical or even anti-political. Part of the "Mission and Role of the IOC" is "to oppose any political or commercial abuse of sport and athletes." IOC members swear an oath to keep themselves free of any political influence. National Olympic Committees (NOCs) are instructed to resist any kind of political pressure. And no political demonstrations are allowed at Olympic sites or venues. At the same time, the Olympic Movement's goals of peace and human dignity are explicitly political. The difference is that they want these goals to be promoted through means other than traditional government politics. This vision reflects the political heritage of the ancient Games, which was religious in orientation but nevertheless had profound political effects precisely for the promotion of respectful competition, human potential, and group cooperation.

According to Espy (1979), within the global political structure numerous forces compete for the attention and resources of the world, the Olympic system being one of them. At the same time, the Olympic Games and the Olympic system reflect the world political structure by virtue of the attention which the other actors themselves direct toward the Games and because of the Olympic system itself. The Games are structured in terms of nation-States: the athlete is a representative of a nation-State; the NOCs are organised within nation-State boundaries; international sport federations are composed of national federations that are organised also within nation-State boundaries; the IOC is the umbrella organisation for the other sport organisations within the context of the Olympic Games and other Olympic-sanctioned events; and IOC members themselves are considered to be ambassadors to nation-State areas. Within this context, the nation-State is the primary actor in the Games, albeit acting through the sport organisations.

*"Theoretically, the sport organisations of the Olympic system are private and*

2 Pierre de Coubertin: Olympic Memoirs, in "Olympic Review", 115, May (1977), pp. 313-317.

*semi-autonomous, as are other transnational actors on the world stage. Since Olympic sport organisations are structured similarly to nation-states, the Olympic system itself manifests traits and actions characteristic of international organisations. Peripheral to but also acting upon the Olympic system are such influences as the media, business, and international and regional organisations. By looking either at the Olympic structure or at the influences upon the Olympic system, three basic forces can be seen at work on the world scene: nationalism, internationalism, and transnationalism" (Espy, 1979, p. 9).*

It is not just specific sequences of political events that appear throughout a set of Olympic Games stagings. It is difficult to distinguish between the political, legal, philosophical, but also moral, content of a concept, which in many cases can lead to erroneous interpretations. However, for example, mixing politics with sport is customarily and historically condemned when it takes the form of *"interference"*, however it should not be considered in the same manner when it takes the form of *"involvement"*. The concept of *"interference"* entails action being taken, and often contains an element of *"intent to impose a view, idea or situation for the purpose of political gain"*, in other words the *"exploitation of sport"* for purposes unrelated to its content. The concept of *"involvement"*, however, does not always require *"intent"*. It may simply co-exist with a sporting event, as a component of an era, international happenstance, a situation that happened to be generated in the context of sporting activity or even Olympic activity. However, the reverse may also occur. That is, *"interference"* by the Olympic Movement in the international political scene with entirely positive consequences, not solely as regards protecting its Principles, but also as regards relations between States.

Moreover, it is a frequently observed phenomenon that, when attempting to interpret an event, people's emotions get in the way or they are affected by the culture they were educated in or sometimes even by elements originating from a simplistic but well-intentioned approach. In this context, there is frequently confusion between what *"ought"* to be done and what *"has"* to be done, which alters the true nature of an event and its ramifications. For example, the concept of protecting human rights, which, although it is globally accepted and can't be compromised, within the administrative context of sports and, consequently, the corresponding Olympic developments, must have selected limitations. This is not easy to explain when restricted by simply invoking a more general concept, when no attempt is made to fit it into a set of rules of behaviour imposed by the Olympic Movement.

An analysis of all these approaches is attempted in the following chapters, in

accordance with the real facts and avoiding characterisations that could affect persons or situations, but at the same time without overshadowing my personal positions as they were shaped with the passage of time and through as wide an angle as possible.

This study, although referring in many points to the Principles and Values of Olympism and their contribution to the shaping of an ideal society, does not include analyses of a philosophical content on the concept of Olympism, since Olympism as a social philosophy is not included in the author's expertise and such an analysis would not significantly serve the purpose and content of the specific treatise.

Nevertheless, in order to make it easier for the reader to understand the concept of the Olympic Movement and the influence of politics on its evolution, a careful approach will be made to the content of the concept of "sport" and "championship" in antiquity and modern times, so the parallel path followed by these two concepts in two completely different time periods is better understood. Depending on the researcher or the teacher, but also on the subject of the analysis that they wish to present, Olympism can be defined, understood and interpreted respectively as a philosophy, as a positive perspective, as a theory, as a global view, and certainly as an attitude or way of life, among others.

Regardless of the form or the content, the concepts contained in the modern understanding of Olympism have evolved from Greek antiquity to become a dynamic framework of values and ethical rules that are applied through sporting activity and are extended to our contemporary daily lives. The birth of the concept of Olympism<sup>3</sup> in the late 19th century should initially be retraced to ancient Greek philosophy and the effort to create an ideal model citizen. The same elements are found in the vision and work of Coubertin who, in the conservative society of his time, wanted to convey the same messages on the ethical and educational dimension of sport.

The great teacher of Olympism, Kleanthis Palaiologos (1976, p. 17), said that "... the Olympic philosophy teaches mutual respect, the pursuit of striving for something better and more perfect, through the love of risk and even sacrifice, the pursuit of distinction from honest observance of the rules of honour, the struggle with ourselves, respect for the moral order that gives man a superior quality of life, racial equality and freedom". Fair play, fair competition and sporting spirit are key components of the modern Olympic code and since all the hardships of our time come from the reduced integrity in human relationships, we should hope that the example we set with the

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<sup>3</sup> The term "Olympism" was conceived by the reviver of the Olympic Games, Pierre de Coubertin.

contests in all sports can be extended to other areas of our daily lives, to human contacts and even politics. A careful look at the evolution of the sport phenomenon in antiquity, from a simple physical exercise as part of an overall balanced education of youth in the beginning to its "professional" dimension over the years, will demonstrate a striking resemblance to the evolution of modern sport.

The original purpose of writing this treatise was to enable the students of the Postgraduate Programme mentioned above to follow with relative ease the relationship between the Olympic Movement and politics; a subject which, by its very nature, contains many unique features. When I decided to record my personal positions in my original teachings my goal was to present "facts" and "thoughts" on this relationship, without the slightest intention of imposing these views on students the majority of whom came from abroad. However, eight years after my initial attempt, I decided to republish it, enriching it with more facts, thoughts and reflections.

The text that follows is separated into two parts. The first part includes an analysis of the phenomenon of the Olympic Games being exploited by politics, the Olympic Movement's attempts to react to this and the relationships forged between politics and the Movement over the period of 120 years they have co-existed. The greatest part of this chapter is dedicated to political and ideological propaganda; the active defence of the Principles of Olympism by the IOC; instances when the Games were boycotted; terrorism; the contribution of the Movement to the political recognition of states; as well as the consequences of the above acts. The second part records all forms of political presence in hosting the Olympic Games, whether this affects how these were conducted or whether it exists in their perceived milieu and is affected thereby.

Dr. Dionyssis Gangas  
August 2021

# PART ONE

## 1. Ancient Greece: From “physical education” to the “Olympic athlete”

The Values of “Olympism”, as understood by ancient Greeks, have been the subject of special studies and have been included in many texts. For example, in his epic poems, *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Homer informs us about the structure and life of ancient Greek cities and societies, as well as the values of the people and the ideals that they embraced (Teetzel, 2015).

Plato provides us with additional information on the values advocated by ancient Greeks with respect to sports and education in the 4th and 5th century BC (Teetzel, 2015). In the *“Republic”*,<sup>4</sup> his renowned work where Socrates and his interlocutors attempt to describe an ideal education system, Plato recognises that sports help in the pursuit of the virtues of wisdom, boldness, temperance, and justice. Socrates advocated that the ideal environment for teaching was the *“gymnasium”*, which provided space to students to complete their physical, ethical, and spiritual education. In this educational system, the gymnasium was a place where the teaching of mathematics, physics, astronomy and dialectics, were taught alongside poetry, music, military education and *“gymnastics”* or exercise, namely foot racing, wrestling, ball games and other physical activities (Olivova, 1984).

Physical education was a main element in forming the ideal character. According to Plato (p. 93): *“...physical education, like literature and arts, pertains to the psyche”* and *“...physical education, in combination with the arts, contributes to the harmonious development of the character’s spiritual and philosophical aspects”*. Plato’s sporting achievements in wrestling prove his dedication to the development of both

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<sup>4</sup> Plato: *The Republic*, translated by F.M. Cornford. London (1945): Oxford University Press.

the body and the intellect through participation in sports, whilst his support of education including sports contributed to the consolidation of the distinct relationship between sports and education in ancient Greece.

It is obvious that some of the greatest ancient philosophers recognised the significance of sports in formulating a harmonious and balanced personality.

The question is what form of sports?

By carefully interpreting the texts of the ancient philosophers, it can be seen that they make a distinction between three related concepts: "physical education", "sports" and "high-level competitive sport". This distinction better helps us approach the concept of Olympism not only in the context of the individual features of societies in Ancient Greece, but also in today's international setting. It is not clear whether the concept of "physical education", which Plato and other contemporary philosophers referred to can be identified as "exercise"! In our times, in the author's view, these two concepts differ in terms of their objective. "Exercise" means physical exercise seeking mental and bodily well-being, whilst "physical education" is the exercise that seeks to improve the physique of an individual with the obvious purpose of participating in sporting activities.

In his texts Plato (p. 39), clarified that "physical education" as part of well-balanced education differs radically from physical education the only objective of which is to improve an athlete's skills, noting that exercising only the body leads to a lack of harmony to the detriment of other aspects of the character, which unavoidably hinders an athlete from achieving *"kalokagathia – beauty and virtue"*. According to Young (2005, pp. 22-41): *"Plato was the first to make the distinction between body and mind and believed that" "...the body and mind must be cultivated together", but this applies to educating the young, and not to Olympic athletes. Conversely, "...an athlete striving for Olympic victory must train all the time! He has time for nothing else"*. Aristotle takes things further, considering that *"...the education of the body is the adversary of educating the mind and training the body is inconsistent with training the mind"*.

These two approaches are important because they indicate that ancient philosophers had foreseen how people's tendency to seek "victory" would evolve, nevertheless without the harmful consequences that this tendency could bring about. Plato discerned the risk that sports would degenerate from what he called *"diversity"* as opposed to *"simplicity"* – freedom from pretentiousness (i.e. from its nature as a spectacle) – and made a compelling argument in favour of sport remaining simple and purely in service of a person's education (Despotopoulos, 1991).

Aristotle, in *"Nicomachean Ethics"* (Teetzel, 2015, p. 108), condemns *"...all exaggerated unilateral development whether mental or physical"* and was adamant



that *"developing the body alone was not enough to give the meaning to one's life"*. However, C. Young (2005), argued that in Politics, Aristotle considered physical and intellectual education as simultaneously incompatible and recommended their separation into two different years of studies. Here, the difference between the concept of "physical education" and "sports" started appearing, while "competition" and "intent to win" were added latter!

The effort to maintain balance between body and mind, the key principle upon which the perfect human character was shaped in the "gymnasia" and "palaestrae", was followed by the appearance of the concepts of "competition" and "victory", which gradually evolved in a continuous effort to exercise as much as possible with the purpose of making the victor's conquest easier. According to Goggaki (2005), most ancient philosophers were critical of young people moving away from *"moderation"* and *"balanced"* exercising of the body and mind, recognising indirectly, but unmistakably, the tendency to promote themselves through distinctions and victories in the competitive arena.

The balanced cultivation of body and mind was widely advocated. The dialogue between Solon and Anacharsis, the Scythian, is a typical example. The latter asked the former: *"...why do you make young people exercise excessively?"* and Solon answered: *"...because we believe that they will have greater willingness to exercise, if they see those who were champions in athletics receiving acclaim and their name spoken before the gathered Greeks... The prizes, in fact, are not minor... Indeed, if one were to take away the desire for glory, what good remains in life?"* This response makes some scholars claim that the entire ideological foundation of his era could be established on the issue of the excessive exercise of the youth (Goggaki, 2005, p. 325).

According to Goggaki (2005, p. 327), *"...Plato also criticised those athletes who aspired to be victors in Olympia, or Delphi, because this did not allow them to pursue other work"*. Young people's tendency towards an extreme form of involvement in sports, that of *"elite athletics"*, through which they sought personal glory and the benefits bestowed on winning is now clear. Moreover, glory would be also bestowed to the city winners originated from".

Gradually, training became more gruelling and competition stiffer, monopolised by few professionals who dedicated their time to it. Amateur athletes, a concept unknown in Ancient Greece, nevertheless existing in terms of content, could not compete with professional athletes who trained their body with the sole purpose to win at contests; hence they were discouraged and became spectators. Before the end of the 5th century BC the word *"athlete"* was synonymous with *"professional athlete"*. Athenian young men abandoned the palaestrae and gymnasiums and spend time in

the baths and the market. An increasing number of winners at Olympia came from Thessaly and Arcadia, whilst their poor but robust compatriots found work as mercenary fighters. Although the Games started out as a local celebration they gradually became an international event, in which all Greeks could take part; that is why athletes from Asia Minor, other parts of Greece and from farther afield started competing; a trend related to the development of Greek cities in the colonies.

Over time, athletics in the great Games evolved into a lamentable State of affairs, whilst bribes were frequent, and victory was sold as often as in modern professional football games. Gradually, the Games became a large festival, where sport was only a part, where *"...the poets read their verses and historians their stories, whilst speakers exchanged views and politicians plotted. Anybody who had anything to exhibit or promote more widely, would go to Olympia, because the crowds there showed no signs of abating"* (McKenzie, 1911, p. 135).

Even though Olympism as a philosophy originated from the relationship that the concept bears to Ancient Olympia and the Games, it would be overreaching to equate its content with the "Olympic Athlete"! In other words, an athlete whose aim was to win the Games pursued not only his personal glory, but also everything that came along with it. A winner at the Olympic Games would go beyond "moderation" and "balance" of body and mind! He would seek victory and promotion of his "city", which would welcome him by demolishing its walls because he could defend the city better than walls - an exaggeration that demonstrates the political importance of winning in the Olympic Games. Cities in Ancient Greece competed against each other on the number of Olympic champions they had.

Although Aristotle praised the value of sports on many occasions, he never hesitated to focus with acerbity on certain divergences – more so than Plato and Democritus. This could be explained by the meaning of the "ethos" or morality concept, as it prevailed from the beginning of post-classical Hellenism. Despotopoulos (1991, p. 69), underscored that: *"...the competitive ethos, which was part and parcel of society and its main forms of expression, appeared diminished in Aristotle's Greece... Strength of body and mind were no longer a major social value.... Sports had not yet disappeared from the life of Greeks, but elite sport did not have the same appeal as in previous centuries. [...] The political exploitation of "victory" was unavoidable in a society, whose foremost unit was the "city". Victory was essentially usurped from the individual victorious athlete in order to become a victory for his city".* That was an age, in which the political exploitation of Olympic victories marked the athlete individually as well as the society he lived in.

Many famous, as well as unknown, Olympic champions attempted (and some

succeeded) in cashing in on their victory by promoting their own political ambitions. Characteristic examples are those of Cyclon from Athens, Chaeron from Achaean Pellene, Timasitheus from Delphi and Hieron and Dionysius from Syracuse, who, after their triumph at the Olympics, attempted to govern their cities as Tyrants (Goggaki, 2005). The case of Alcibiades is also characteristic of the importance attributed to Olympic victory by ancient Greeks.

There is no agreement between modern and ancient scholars and philosophers on how they view Olympic athletes' behaviour and the quality of their character. Some noted that athletes who participated in ancient Games did embrace the idea of "*kalokagathia* – virtue and beauty" (Reid, 2012), while others argued that the Games were not the ideal place to seek "*kalokagathia*". Examples of athletes who cheated, bribed and intentionally injured their adversaries at the Games held in Olympia and other athletic festivals, prove that the ancient Greek educational values were not always expressed in the sports field (Young, 2005).

In summarising the above, an interesting curve can be drawn that depicts the evolution from simple physical exercise to Olympic athlete. The curve would start with "*physical education*" and "*exercising the body*" in the educational gymnasia, in parallel with "*exercising the mind*" with the aim of creating a "*good and virtuous*" citizen, in an ideal setting with a "*balance*" between physical and mental dimension. However, "*victory*" appears to distract the youth from this "*balance*", as they feel superior when the result of physical exercise offered them the fulfilment of "*agon*" or contest and "*victory*" over their fellow pupils, a victory that offers a variety of benefits.

Thus, they gradually disregard "*physical education*" and embrace "*training*", i.e. concentrated preparation for participating in contests and winning victories.

The curve would continue with the youth pursuing victory not only in the palaestrae and gymnasiums, but also in a set of "*Games*", such as the Isthmian Games, the Delphic Games, the Panathenaea and, finally, the greatest of them all, the Olympic Games. This gave rise to the Olympic athlete, who gradually became vulnerable; in the beginning he was seeking personal glory, later he was seeking riches, political promotion and finally, quite often, because he was intellectually weak, he became easy prey to those who wanted to exploit his successes!

Goggaki (2005, p. 374), referring to Claudius Galen, argues that "*...athletes of the last phase (champions and Olympians) of the 2nd century AD, received serious criticism, which was not aimed at the concept of sport, but at the way it had evolved over time*". The objection raised is a criticism of issues completely connected with the new form taken by the athletes at that time and which, in any case, are not that different from the criticisms we see today:

- Excessive awarding of honours and rewards for the athlete, with a corresponding deterioration of intellectual contribution.
- One-sided exercise with excessive physical development, without corresponding intellectual cultivation.
- Violence in sporting events that undermines the spirit of sport.
- Excesses in the lives of athletes.<sup>5</sup>
- Athletes with a less stringent moral compass especially in the search for material wealth.
- Exploitation of victory for selfish purposes, aimed at demonstrating strength and wealth.

The curve would enter a third and final cycle of the evolution of the Games of antiquity, which would be their gradual decline. Their final abolition should not be attributed exclusively to the Emperor Theodosius' decree of 394 AD, since the athletes had already started many years before to condemn victories for the glory and had turned to more substantial rewards. Mayer (1963, p. 53), suggests that: *"...the moral degradation of the Olympic ideal by the participants themselves was what caused the decline of the Games."*

## 2. Coubertin's Olympism

It is obvious that competitive sports in ancient times ran a parallel course with those of the modern era and present significant similarities. The separation of sport into three distinct eras (*"physical education"*, *"competitive sport"* and *"elite sport"*) in ancient times differs only slightly from the evolution of modern sport.

In an effort to establish education as an important pillar in shaping modern citizens, Coubertin idealised the Olympic athlete, set aside his imperfections and aimed at the internationalisation of the values that express "Olympism" to the benefit of the concept of education. The late Otto Szymiczek (Simitsek), a great researcher and scholar of the phenomenon of Olympism, in a speech he delivered at the 12th International Session at the International Olympic Academy (1972), in which he served as Dean from 1962 until his death in 1990, noted that: *"...Coubertin, in dreaming of reviving the ancient Games, also envisaged the simultaneous revival of their spirit, desiring to restore a global spirit of unity to the world, a global psyche, a renewed idea, a new Olympia, which would trace the steps of the ancient Olympia and continue on its course"*.

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<sup>5</sup> Here we could add, without departing from the spirit of the original wording, that in modern sport, this "excess in special diet" most probably contains elements of the use of banned stimulants.

Coubertin, as did many other modern scholars, equated Ancient Greece with the Olympic Games, considering that they were the ultimate expression of the best ancient Greek ideals. Indeed, many characteristics of the modern Olympic Movement, such as excellence, religion, culture, balance between body and mind, appear in Greek life in general, especially the Greek gymnasium (where the body was educated along with the mind) and in the great festivals, such as the Isthmia and Delphi (where athletic competitions were held alongside music and theatre). Crowther (2005, p. 2) notes that *"...the ancient Greeks themselves did not call the Olympics Games, but olympiakoí agones, or Olympic contests. ... We should next consider the question of how Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the acknowledged founder of the modern Olympic Movement – although of course he was not the only one involved – interpreted the ancient Olympics and competition. Was he simply following tradition in referring to the ancient Olympics and those of 1896 as Games, or les jeux olympiques in his own language? Was Coubertin aware of the agon and its significance in ancient Greece? Interestingly, among the 450 books discovered in Coubertin's private library on his death in 1937, the only ancient Greek authors were Aristotle, Homer, and Plato, and these books were not in the original language, but in French translation and published before his famous Congress at the Sorbonne in 1894, where he announced his plans for the modern Olympics"*.

It is certain that when Coubertin started implementing his vision he did not take into account the evolution of the Games in ancient times because he was interested in the ideals that they exuded. That explains why he believed that youth education in his era would be helped through these internationalist Games. When he realised that the Olympic Movement would not attain the targets he had envisioned, he advocated in favour of the creation of a centre for education and research to protect it from divergences – that had already started appearing from the first years of organising the Games.

Nevertheless, it is a fact that the relationship between the Games in ancient times and the quest for virtue and *kalokagathia* was strong; as were the values of honour, peace and the pursuit of excellence, respect and noble competition, which remained closely linked with ancient Olympic athletes. This approach many attribute to the Coubertin persistence on idealising the institution, transposing his philosophy onto modern times.

Coubertin's interest in reviving the ancient Games was very broad and complex. According to Georgiadis (2003, p. 93), *"...his motivation was not to gain personal benefit nor to garner international fame and recognition, but rather to reform the physical education system of his country, providing youth something which they had*

to *strive in order to achieve*". When he was young, he witnessed German forces invading France and wanted to contribute to improving the health and prosperity of his people. He travelled to Britain, to other European countries, as well as in North and South America, where he studied the physical education systems at schools. Inspired by the models he had observed, he formulated a physical education programme that was based on physical exercise, in combination with the values and their interpretation about the virtues adopted by ancient Olympic athletes (Teetzel, 2015).

His trip to Britain was decisive for the completion of his vision. Invited by Dr William Penny Brookes, at Much Wenlock, he got to know the doctor's efforts as an ideologist to revive the Games in a closed, purely amateur club that continues to this day! Brookes had already contacted the Greek Evangelos Zappas, who in turn had made attempts to revive the Games in Greece in modern times. Coubertin admired the efforts of Brookes and the "*Olympian Games*" he had organised at that time, which are still being held today, in a climate different from the Games established by Coubertin (Georgiadis, 2003).

In 1865, Brookes founded the National Olympian Association (NOA), which was based in Liverpool. His goal was to create a sports association for amateur athletes and he organised the first sports festival with a huge audience. As an awe-inspiring opponent of the National Olympian Association Festival and the Games, which Brookes founded and that were addressed to the residents of his city, a group of elite sports people founded the "*Amateur Athletic Club*", which was later named "*The Amateur Athletics Association*" (AAA) (the British Olympic Committee today). Based in London, the AAA was exclusively concerned with student - athletes from public schools and students of Oxford and Cambridge. Brookes' NOA immediately faced a lot of pressure, but nevertheless managed to impose its point of view and forced AAA to expand participation in the competitions it organised, "*to every grade man*", by opening the doors to the hitherto excluded farmers and workers.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the emphasis that Coubertin placed on the idealism of "*Ancient Hellenism*", the concept of Olympism, which he promoted in the late 19th century was greatly affected by two other factors: a) the concept of chivalry of the European Middle Ages, which included the virtues of courage, generosity, devotion, honesty, defence of law and protection of the weak and b) the theories and practices of English, French and American education systems of the 19th and 20th century with their liberal, cosmopolitan and internationalist approaches.

The idealist Coubertin believed that sport helps to develop self-awareness and

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.wenlock-olympian-society.org.uk/history/>

when once asked what Olympism is, he replied: *"... it is the religion of energy, the cultivation of intense will developed through the practice of manly sports, based on proper hygiene and public-spiritedness, surrounded with art and thought"* (Muller, 2000, p. 44).

Finally, he was of the opinion that the revival of the Games would arouse the interest of the public and governments and would serve as a vehicle for transmitting the Values of Olympism to young people. He believed that Olympism had philosophical and educational implications and that sport could be the means for the physical, moral and cultural education of those involved.

According to Kidd (1996, p. 83) *"...Coubertin's Olympism constituted a "broad educational movement that, through the activity of sport and culture, would enhance human development and generally make the world a better place"*. Kidd also notes in an earlier article (1984 p. 71) that: *"...dressing his games in the image of antiquity (Coubertin) proved to be a masterstroke of public relations" and "linking to antiquity gave universal character to the Games"*.



*The members of the first composition of the IOC at the Athens 2nd Session in 1896. From left to right: Dr W. Gebhardt (Germany), Baron Pierre de Coubertin (France) General Secretary, Dr Jiri Guth (Austria-Bohemia), Demitrios Vikelas (Greece) President, Ferenc Kemeny (Hungary), General Butowsky (Russia), Victor Black (Sweden).*

The rapid acceptance and evolution of the institution of the Games, in combination with the parallel development and participation of youth in sports, made it necessary to create a suitable environment for educating younger generations. Despite the fact that the Games quickly conquered the world, Coubertin discovered quite early on that they trod a path that made them stray far from his initial intention, at least according to his vision, repeating in a certain manner the course they had taken in ancient times. Thus, as already mentioned, in his letter to the Minister of Sports in Germany on 16/03/1937, he expressed his concerns, noting that the Olympic Movement should not deviate from its educational goals. In this respect he wrote: *"...unfortunately I did not manage to complete what I wanted to achieve. I believe that the creation of a Centre for Olympic Studies would aid the preservation and progress of my work more than anything else and would keep it from the false paths, which I fear"* (Müller, 1975, pp. 109-110).

What did Coubertin see that others did not, and what would go on to escape his control with respect to the evolution of Olympism?

The reviver of the "Games" was interested not only in promoting a sporting event, but also in promulgating a set of philosophical ideas and education that he thought would improve the world. Coubertin, impressed as he was by the simplicity and clarity of the meaning underlined in the youth's parallel involvement in education and physical education in ancient times, wished to restore this combination in his times, with the revival of the Olympic Games.

With the aim of attaching a universal dimension to it, the idea of the Games was embraced by the concept of internationalism, which would refer to the inclusion of all world States in this sport event. An event which, in antiquity, carried the same feature but in a different form, since the different cities of Ancient Greece were considered to be separate States. This international identity of the Games has also been the significant distinctiveness between Coubertin and the other visionaries of such revival, as Zappas and Brooks.

Hoberman (1986 p. 85-86), underlines an interesting issue, about which Coubertin was deeply concerned: *"...Coubertin's unflagging devotion to the Olympic Movement did not overlook its vulnerabilities. His reservations are clearly spelled out in his published writings though they are largely unknown and seldom discussed. First of all, Coubertin saw in sport a profound ambivalent potential, which can set in motion the most noble or the most vile ones; it can develop disinterestedness and the sense of honor as well the love for lucre; it can be chivalric or corrupt, virile or bestial; finally, it can be used to consolidate peace or prepare for war {...} This*



*ambivalence is evident in Coubertin's treatment of the record performance, about which he published an essay in 1909 titled *La limit du record*. Whereas Coubertin states elsewhere that there are instances where attempts to set records constitute a breach of his code, most of his remarks on the record performance show approval and even fascination. {...} Nevertheless, the frequency of his references to its distorting effects suggests the persistence of his reservations".*

Coubertin very soon realized the dangers the pursuit of "record" embody in the contemporary world. As Muller observes (2000, p. 160) in the leading article of the "Figaro" in 1903, Coubertin refers to the latest development in sport, the striving for records: "...Not everyone, however, appreciates the educational value of the expression (record and bringing these two ideas – education and records – together will certainly seem a daring move. A record, you see, is considered the quintessence of effort. Therefore, it is viewed as extraordinarily harmful in a time when our quest for the average tends to gain the upper hand over our thirst for perfection. This is a mistake. Records can be put to excessive use but taken by themselves, they are less prone to exaggeration than is competition. The reason is simple. Competition places you to struggle, making you another living being's competitor. A record faces you up against an inanimate fact, a figure, a measure of space or of time. Strictly speaking, you are fighting only with yourself."

Coubertin's ambivalent approach to the issue of performance and records as the result of the athlete's development was probably the reason why the reviver tried so hard to disassociate the notion of "amateur" from that of the "professional" athlete, a separation that occupied the Olympic Movement for many decades.

However, what Coubertin had not detected was the fact that the Olympic Games had its own route in antiquity and inevitably evolved in the same manner in the contemporary world. This event would consequently be influenced by each era's dynamics, leading the institution to a different direction from that it had originally been planned to take. Coubertin only realized this after 1936 and the Berlin Olympic Games.

The philosophy of Olympism can be divided into three time periods. **Starting from antiquity**, where it appears as a "trend", or as a "set of ideas" aiming at the balanced development of a person's character through physical and intellectual exercise, it continues with the **period of the revival**, when this same tendency was named "Neo-Olympism" by Coubertin himself (in contrast to "Ancient-Olympism") to end with the **present day**, in the form of "Global-Olympism", which brings together all the challenges gradually engendered by globalisation and technological advances!

This latter period is the most difficult. Not only as regards understanding Olympic Values within the multilevel setting of modern societies, but mainly the challenges that they contain. For example, *"fair play"* and *"respecting the opponent"* are at odds with doping, both legal and illegal. The value of *"respecting diversity"* has to contend with new religious customs and mores and personal choices, such as in cases of sexual orientation. The *"respect of truce and peace"* has to contend with provocative political fixations, which exclude the possibility of close collaboration and solidarity amongst athletes from conflict zones. The *"Pursuit of Excellence"* comes in conflict with the cynical pursuit of a more lucrative victory.

Recognising that the Olympic ideals, like all ideals, are by definition unattainable, it is argued that what matters most, from an ethical point of view, is the pursuit of their implementation, which must be encouraged. Sports programmes are designed to attract the most talented young athletes for the purpose of enhancing their performance and guiding them to victory, with an excessive stress on the nationalist reasons for pursuing victory. This category may include *"national sports days"* established in different countries if their aim is to attract young talented athletes who may win Olympic medals in the future, after hard training and practice. On the other hand, if their goal is to introduce new sports to young athletes in order to instill in them a love of sports and the pursuit of excellence throughout their lives, they should work differently and conform to the philosophy of Olympism (Teetzel, 2015).

It is clear that the philosophy of Olympism, as developed in the social landscape of the Coubertin era, has in many respects been overtaken by the rapid development of technology, science and the needs of the modern era. Could it be that the philosophy of Olympism itself is not outdated, but rather its interpretation as presented by its reviver? Many modern analysts might agree with this view!

In order to understand the philosophical approaches better, we must go back in time mentally to the era they emerged or were revived. We have to relive the setting, in which they were called upon to be applied, because only in this manner can we also understand the excesses that Coubertin attempted to impose, although certain scholars are rather facile in calling him an *"ultraconservative"*! Indeed, society of those times may well have excluded women from sports, but the concept of *"equality"* did not change in meaning over time! Equality exists, also in the context accepted by the present social culture. The same applies to the concept of *"respecting diversity"*, which in our days takes on a special importance due to globalisation. It is therefore considered imperative to attempt a re-reading of Coubertin, putting in the frame the characteristics of each Value promoted by this great scholar, as well

as contemporary facts and assumptions, such as recent geopolitical disruption and developments!

Over the past 2,500 years, Olympism, as a concept and philosophy, has never been static. It has evolved alongside the development of the modern Olympic Movement. Using Olympic Education programmes focused on values and organised by many NOCs and NOAs, the philosophy of Olympism continues to be discussed, promoted and developed by enhancing the value of sporting participation.

Coubertin's insistence that the Games should be more than sport led the IOC founders to incorporate the philosophy of Olympism into the first two paragraphs of the fundamental Principles of the Olympic Charter<sup>7</sup>. However, according to modern standards, the reviver's views, in particular his insistence on focusing his "*New-Olympism*" on amateurism for young male aristocrats rather than women, are now merely historical references.

The last three IOC Presidents, Juan Antonio Samaranch, Jacques Rogge and Thomas Bach, successfully identified, each in their own era, the demands of "*Global-Olympism*" and introduced novelties that rejuvenated the Olympic Movement, giving it another dimension completely different from that of the end of the 19th century, without, however, turning their back on the core Values that Coubertin's Olympism advocated. The acceptance of professional athletes in the eighties; the inception of Youth Olympic Games in 2010; the 2020 Agenda; and the continued investment in the educational aspects of the Games re-position the Olympic Movement on new foundations, so as not to put a stop to Olympism's philosophy evolving, creating innovations in terms of the content of the Olympic Movement and giving hope for the future.

In order, however, to fully understand the vision, thought and intention of this great man, we should take into account the fact that his philosophical approach was addressed, in the late 19th century, as mentioned above, to a society that was very conservative, and his "*athlete*" was the then "*amateur athlete*" and not today's "*professional*" athlete.

This turning point in the development of sport and elite sport in ancient times, also appeared unequivocally in the modern form of sport. The pure and guileless

7 1. Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example, social responsibility and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.

2. The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.

"*amateur athlete*" of the end of the 19th century, who trained in parallel with his studies, is remarkably similar with the athlete in the first phase of sport development in ancient times. Characteristic of the simplicity and the wholesome acceptance of the modern Movement introduced by Coubertin, with which the conservative world of his era accepted it, was the fact that the athletes making up the US Olympic team at the first Game in Athens, in 1896, were also students at Princeton University (Georgiadis, 2003). But that came to an end very shortly!

Gradually, personal and political competition started appearing, in a threatening manner, almost by default, taking the same course as sport and the Games in antiquity, simply at a more rapid pace, driven, mainly, by faster technological development. The thirst for personal distinction with the corresponding material benefits an exploitation of the great visibility, which the modern Games soon acquired, attracted not only politicians who perceived an easy way to promote ideas and systems, but also professionals and promoters from all sectors who sought profit through success in sports.

In the modern era, the Games went through their various phases at a faster rate. Not so much as regards athletes' personal exploitation of victory for material gains, but more as regards the exploitation of victory by figures outside sports, whose aim was mainly to secure political clout. The commercialisation of sport would occur later, much later than the sixties.

Otto Simitsek (1989, p. 53), describes in simple terms the content of the philosophy of Olympism in his speech in the context of the IOA 29th International Session for Young Participants: "*The philosophy of Olympism, as expressed by the established Olympic Values, is essentially a philosophy of education and its aims are the internal perfection of man, with a strong, willful character, high-spiritedness and the desire, always and mainly to distinguish oneself and to excel*".

In order for sport to become exploitable it had to be transformed into a major spectacle, capable not only of attracting spectacle-loving audiences, but also of conveying messages to a broader social sphere. The super-athlete, who conquers one Olympic victory after another, has to be bolstered medically to withstand the gruelling preparation in order to promote not only himself – cashing in on all the respective material rewards – but also his country of origin. The mantle of nationalism surrounds Olympic champions, sometimes advertising the political system that prepared them and sometimes the ideology that they represented. From the moment that the crowd becomes increasingly impressed by the records, strength or technique, the super-athlete is transformed from an individual portraying moder-

ation and balance to a machine broadcasting messages that have little bearing on what the Greek philosophers intended to teach, or Coubertin's vision for that matter.

Unfortunately, after 2,500 years, history can only repeat itself! However, because of the rapid development of technology and media in the modern society of globalisation, everything is happening at a faster rate and in a more impressive fashion. As early as 1908, Coubertin himself expressed his concerns about the exploitation of the Olympic phenomenon with the objective of increasing political might. After the London Games, in 1908, he stated that: "...the Games have become an affair of States" (Parry & Girginov, 2005, p. 154). Ironically, the Olympic Charter explicitly prohibits any form of political dependence of IOC members or the promotion of nationalist tendencies through the Games.

The third phase of the development of Olympism can be found from the mid-20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, with the concept of "*amateur athletes*" being completely replaced by that of "*professional champions*", whose successes are not restricted only to their own moral and material satisfaction, but have rather become fertile ground for any form of exploitation.

Thus, it was only a matter of time for the Olympic Movement, with its impressively increasing influence over the members of the global society, to become an active agent on the international political scene, with results that are sometimes positive and sometimes negative.

### 3. An initial overview of the problem

One of the most controversial and debatable subjects, which, curiously, only a few analysts of the Olympic Movement have investigated, is the different ways in which the exercise of domestic and international politics has influenced the development of Olympism, both in the content of its very philosophy, and its practical implementation through organised sports and, primarily, the Olympic Games. It is possible this phenomenon has not been systematically studied and showcased because, throughout the entire course of the Movement and mainly the development of the Games, the various events that characterised the interaction of sports and politics were dealt with individually and not as branches of a single tree, which gradually spread out covering all the facets of the phenomenon of this relationship.

Additionally, it seems that the dictum "keep sport separate from politics", which prevailed in the Olympic Movement for many years, impeded the study

of sport in international relations curricula until very recently. The irony is that sport has always been a rich vein of study for these issues both in applied and theoretical directions. At present, for example, sport contributes significantly to issues such as globalisation, NGO actions and activities, international negotiation and reconciliation, nation state development, power relations, and international relations.

However, there is a long history of international relations/politics closely linked to the Games. Even the ancient Olympics had clear city-State political dimensions, while in the modern era, the international relations aspect has been ever-present.

There can be no doubt that Coubertin, the man inspired to revive the Games, had accurately foreseen that politics would intervene in sports and in the Olympic Movement and, particularly, in its most characteristic expression, the Olympic Games. In fact, he referred to this phenomenon in at least three instances.

In 1908, as noted in the previous chapter, Coubertin expressed concern about the misuse of the Olympic project for political aims, when he said after the London Olympics: “...*the Games have become an affair of States*”.

Already at that time, the Baron had identified the risk of a relationship between politics and sports which, given the strong position of politics at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, could only function to the detriment of the latter. Naturally, he could not have foreseen at that time that, alongside political exploitation, ideological and religious exploitation would make an appearance in sport.

In 1920, during the opening of the 19th IOC Session in Antwerp, he justified the priority of sport under the motto “Sport is the King”, while tackling indirectly the political ambitions of using the sport for political purposes: “...*While not denying the value of regulations, one must admit that they will always remain inadequate instruments for athletic purification. A law is only as sound as the men who enforce it. Here, too, it is the men that one must keep in mind. Management of athletic associations is too often left in the hands of professionals administrators or politicians... {...} athletic associations should be resolute in keeping their distance from anyone offering to manage them but who is really thinking only of using other people’s muscles to build up his own political future...*” (Müller, 2000, p.p. 224-225).

The second allusion to this same matter was made in an open letter to “young people of all nations” in Ancient Olympia, in 1927, when he repeated his fears regarding the risk of sports being exploited by politics for its own expedencies, in which he characteristically wrote: “...*My friends, I have not worked to offer you the*

*Olympic Games, so that they be transformed into a museum object or subject for the cinema, nor for them to be used for commercial or political interests"* (Müller, 2000, p. 560).

The phenomenon had appeared in various guises in the Games that had already been staged, a fact that confirmed his reservations. He considered that this development was the main digression from the Values that make up the notion of Olympism. Already at that time, the Baron had evidence concerning the course of this phenomenon and the risk of a relationship between politics and sport, which, given the dominant position of politics at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, could only function to the detriment of the latter.



Pierre de Coubertin: *"My friends, I have not worked to offer you the Olympic Games, so that they be transformed into a museum object or subject for the cinema, nor for them to be used for commercial or political interests"*.

A year before his death, in 1936, having already lived through a number of Games and seeing the emergence of the greatest threat, that of exploitation by Nazi Germany's politics, Coubertin published his New Year's message in the Belgian journal *"les Sports Illustrés"*, stating characteristically: *"...Today politics enter into the heart of any matter. How can we expect that sport, the culture of muscles and Olympism itself will remain unaffected?"*. In Coubertin's view, Olympism should not be swayed by transient phenomena and should remain independent from opportunistic situations in politics (Müller, 2000, p. 584).

Coubertin's period inevitably passed by even more rapidly than he had feared. Entering the 20th century, sports appeared as the "social conquest" of the era of industrialisation.

It depended on private initiative; and the so-called "upper class", focused on amateurism; without women and nationalist minorities, it comprised a "game" for the few. In this form, politics was rarely concerned with the Olympic Movement, with the exception of exploiting it opportunistically on a limited level. Few people believed that it could play a serious role on an international level, even though its strength had started being tested on a domestic level in many countries.

The Inter-war period was particularly important in the development of the relationship between sports and politics, mainly through an increasing number of international sporting events and the interest that the middle class started displaying during that period. The simplistic exploitation of the internationalised sports phenomenon, which had prevailed until that time, became a tool in the hands not only of totalitarian regimes, but also democratic governments, in an effort to balance ideologically opposing political currents. The emergence of new countries, mainly in Africa, with exceptionally skilled athletes, was yet another factor in a new climate forging the relationship between sports and politics.

The great ideological and political change that started following World War I and intensified after the fifties, radically changed the global sports map. A result of these changes in the world order was to expand the studies into international relations and comparative domestic policy, with sports emerging gradually as an important factor in forging both domestic and international relations. It was now certain that sports could be used both internationally and nationally to promote national unity and identity. In an ever-changing world stage over the last decades, there has been an increased awareness of the political importance of sports, which resulted in their use as a political tool by a large number of countries up until the end of the eighties.

Although on many occasions the IOC has stressed that "...the worlds of sport and politics should remain separate and the Olympic Games should not be used by States for political benefits", the Games have repeatedly become a stage for political confrontation, national promotion and extreme expressions of political and ideological motivation. Following his retirement, Lord Killanin, IOC President from 1972 to 1980, stated that: "...95% of my problems as IOC President had to do with national and international politics" (Parry & Girginov, 2004, p. 154).

Through its Charter, the IOC rejects, categorically, any political phenomena



and other behaviours that violate the fundamental Principles of the Olympic spirit.<sup>8</sup> The exclusive protection of these Principles by the Olympic Movement, however extended it may be, cannot, because of the nature of this Institution, totally eliminate certain phenomena, which have developed in parallel with the evolution of the Games by building on their worldwide appeal. One of these phenomena is the political exploitation of the popularity of the Olympic Games at an international level.



*Lord Killanin "...95% of my problems as IOC President had to do with national and international politics".*

As Garcia and Miah (2012, p. 67) observe, "... the Olympic Movement's orientation towards political issues is difficult to discern. Historically, the IOC has persistently advocated the idea that the Olympic Movement should not engage with political issues or national government matters and, instead, confine itself to the business of sport. This view is born out of the IOC's primary desire to ensure that as many countries from around the world as possible feel able to align themselves with the Olympic Values and send their athletes to the Games. Indeed, the scale of this challenge should not be understated".

After all, while the UN presently has 192 member-States, there are 206 within

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<sup>8</sup> Fundamental Principles of Olympism: 6 "The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Olympic Charter shall be secured without discrimination of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status"

the Olympic family.<sup>9</sup> As such, ensuring that each of these countries is able to put politics aside in order to compete in sport is a remarkable diplomatic achievement. In present times, nobody contests the fact that the Olympic Movement, regardless of how much it tried to stay away from politics, was minimally successful in this endeavour. However, theoreticians and experts have expressed opposing views on this issue. Some, led by Avery Brundage, IOC President from 1952 to 1972, who throughout his involvement in sporting developments was a passionate champion of this theory, insisted on the complete separation of politics from sports. This view was considered unrealistic and conflicting with reality, as from the outset of the Olympic Movement politics had played an important role in its evolution. On the other hand, since the era of Samaranch, the involvement of politics in sports and vice versa, sometimes positive and sometimes negative, had been fully acknowledged and today we have reached the point where it is *"imposed"* in a certain manner by the new IOC leadership, as a necessary precondition for co-existence in a world full of inequality. This opinion was straightforwardly expressed by the incumbent IOC President Thomas Bach in one of his recent speeches at the opening ceremony of the Asian Games in Incheon, South Korea (24/09/2014).<sup>10</sup>

It is certain that between Brundage's extreme idealistic views expressing the position of the IOC and the harsh reality (which proves that the path of sports and politics is indubitably interlinked) there is a fine line that separates what *"should be"* from *"what actually is"*. It is a conflict between ideology and realism on a common basis – the sporting field!

The difficult question that we are called upon to answer today is not, whether we like it or not, if the paths of politics and sport are interlinked with the positive or negative results that this fine line might bring, but whether Olympism and the Olympic Movement, and by extension sport as a social event, can afford to be turned into an exploitable product by political opportunism! Because, ultimately, the concepts of *"coexistence"* (even *"understanding"*) of politics and sport are completely different from that of *"exploitation"* of sport by politics. This was what Brundage feared as well as those in favour of *"keeping sports separate from politics"*.

Especially at a time when World War II, the emergence of the East-West ideological conflict, the emergence of third world countries and the rise of ideological

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<sup>9</sup> Olympic Committees recognized by the IOC, which do not represent independent State entities. See relevant chapter below.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.apnews.com/8fa01a7b258c4ad8b0e486d2237439b6>

and racial oppositions, were part of the daily life of every society in the world.

The uneven reaction of the IOC in many cases of clear violation of the ideological basis by political practices, and its controversial behaviour in some instances, do not help find a clear orientation that can be accepted by modern society. The issue is not whether sport and politics are interlinked, but how to distinguish the positive from the negative effects of this relationship.

In the light of this deep involvement of the Olympic Movement in world politics, Nikos Nissiotis, then President of the IOA (1977-1986) still felt able to argue that: *"...certainly, we cannot ignore the fact that Olympism is inescapably linked with politics, but we should not allow the interference of international politics in Olympic affairs, to the best of our abilities"* (Chatziefsthathiou, 2005, p. 310).

This great philosopher had foreseen the imminent interference of politics in the Olympic Movement and the difficulties it would face in the future and that is why he ends his thought with *"to the best of our abilities"*.

The presence of Juan Antonio Samaranch at the helm of the IOC until his departure and the developments that took place subsequently after 2001, during Jacques Rogge's presidency, gave a new impetus to the Olympic Movement and international sport in general, which significantly contributed to reducing excessive phenomena of sports exploitation for political and ideological expediences. Samaranch, in his autobiography, (2002, pp. 88-89), very aptly sets out the relationship between sport and politics: *"...History teaches us that politics has always been present in the development of the Olympic Movement since its founding in 1894. It could not be otherwise. Nevertheless, it has been repeatedly stated for a long time that one should not involve sport in politics. For some, these two principles were like water and oil: one was pushing the other. This is far from reality. Politics is present at all levels of social life, and therefore also in the field of sport. Politics and sport must coexist and establish a general framework of mutual respect"*. He continues saying that: *"...we must always remember that the spirit of the Olympic Movement is an integral part of society and, therefore, is doomed to come to terms with political powers. The development of physical and sports education cannot take place if it is not integrated into a government policy that also studies the general education programme and health policy. For this essential reason, we have always encouraged the various National Olympic Committees to maintain close and cordial relations with their governments, in the context of their own independent action."*

Coubertin believed that the concept of Olympism appears in two forms, which develop in parallel and converge on man as the ultimate recipient of its content. It is widely known in the circles of the Olympic family that he wanted to bring the Olympic Idea to the modern world through education. As mentioned above, he believed that the revival of the Games would arouse the interest of the public and governments, so that they would serve as a vehicle for the dissemination of the Principles of Olympism to the general education of young people.

However, since 1896, all the Olympic Games have been organised with the agreement and/or the participation of governments and the support of political parties across the board. Moreover, the IOC has had to negotiate with governments each time a political crisis arose concerning the Games. The Olympic Movement is an integral part of society and therefore has a duty to come to terms with the public authorities. Physical and sports education cannot develop if it is not integrated into government education and health policy.

If we examine the era when the sports movement takes on a structured form (with associations and rules on how to conduct sports) as our starting point in this trajectory, to see how politics and sport influence each other, we will ascertain a dynamic reversal of this phenomenon. Around the turn of the 19th century, although thriving private sports associations existed in England and France, important decisions pertaining to the sports movement were made by the governments of the time. Even before World War II, in most countries, the decision of whether a national delegation would participate in the Olympic Games was made by the government, irrespective of the fact that a NOC was formally responsible for making that decision.

The sports movement started to become internationalised with the appearance of the Olympic Movement and, despite the feeling which prevailed at that time that it depended primarily on private initiative, it could not have actually proceeded far if governments and the politicians that comprised them had not interceded and supported its development. This form of exploitation of sport by politics first appeared, in most instances, during the first half of the Movement's course, mainly because sport depended financially on the intentions of the governments of the time; however, slowly and over time, this started to do an about-face. In the first half of the 20th century, the world witnessed two world wars and a worldwide depression.

It was a time when the major role in the development of sport was assumed by governments as they were the main supporters of clubs and associations in every

country. This relationship would change gradually, especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall, taking an opposite path in favour of the superiority of the Olympic Movement until the present day, when the Movement sat in the driver's seat for good, as will be explained in the following chapters.

As Espy observes (1979 p. 21): *"...While the Olympics have survived these catastrophes, the world in the second half of the 20th century has been one whose political structure has been profoundly affected by the cataclysmic events of the first half. The Olympic Movement, composed of most amateur sport organisations in the world, has harked back to its 19th-century origins for the answers to 20th-century problems. This has created the essential quandary of the Olympic Games as a 19th-century phenomenon operating in the context of the 20th century, as an ideal struggling to become reality"*.

Up until the mid-eighties, political or ideological interference in the Olympic Movement was not limited solely to the narrow field of imposing national limits; it extended to the international level, reaching its culmination with the two boycotts, in Moscow (1980) and in Los Angeles (1984). It was during this period that the Olympic Movement and sport in general began to grasp its real clout. And while every national sports movement was fatefully under the indirect (and often direct) influence of the national political will, the Olympic Movement, under the management of the IOC and the strong personality of its President Samaranch, began to be aware of its power resulting from the acceptance of the Movement by the vast majority of the world community. That acceptance gradually made the IOC, the most powerful player in the coexistence of politics and sport. The economic success of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games, which depended exclusively on private initiative, in combination with the great shift in IOC governance made by Juan Antonio Samaranch, paved the way to reverse relations between State and sports administration. Examples of how politics have influenced sports, outlined in the following chapters, clearly demonstrate who prevailed in this tug of war. Readers may see for themselves to what extent governments attempted to exploit sports, so as to impose their diverse political choices, nationally and internationally, until the time when relations were reversed.

So, what made the Olympic Movement a key factor in the relationship between political and ideological expediency on the one hand and Olympic philosophy, on the other, as this took shape over the past 30 years?

Undoubtedly, the dynamic growth of the Olympic Games in the new environment of economic and social globalisation and their acceptance as a major eco-

conomic, social, cultural and sporting event significantly prevents their exploitation for political ends. Indeed, apart from the boycott of the 1984 Games by Eastern bloc countries in response to the boycott by Western countries of the 1980 Moscow Games and the mini-boycott in 1988 Seoul Games, there hasn't been any other serious political or ideological excess until the 2012 London Games.

The obstruction of the Olympic Torch Relay by Tibetan activists as a reaction to China's foreign policy and the threat of some fanatics to use the 2014 Sochi Games for their purposes, could be considered as exceptions.

This fact could be considered as a major reversal of the tranquillity that prevailed for 20 years in Olympic affairs. As Cottrell and Nelson (2011 p. 745) point out: *"...the relationship between sport and international politics is not a simple one and many paradoxes lie at the heart of this relationship. The Olympics represent one of the most heated and intense forms of international competition, but they are also used as a symbol to promote peace. Olympic sport strives to be apolitical yet is consistently politicized. The Olympics are designed around and orchestrated according to a State based international system, yet activist groups and institutions such as the IOC can exercise unusual power at these events. It is precisely these paradoxes that make the Olympics so much more than a sporting event, but an important political, social, economic, and cultural phenomenon"*.

The gradual change in relations between sports and politics, which was chiefly brought about by the fall of the Eastern bloc that radically reduced international competition as regards the system that would prevail – that of real socialism or that of market economy – proved that the Olympic Movement was in a position to impose its own rules and its own priorities. The Movement's drive in the nineties in the sector of international peace obliged the United Nations (UN) to recognise the great contribution of sport in this matter. This was an era when the political exploitation of the Games gave way to sports ridding themselves of the forces of political and ideological expediency. In retrospect, looking at this longstanding relationship, it was politics that needed the Olympic Movement to put across certain messages in international transnational relations. A typical example nowadays being the rapprochement of South and North Korea, which was undoubtedly due to the activities undertaken by IOC bodies and President Bach to that end.

Having broken free from the bonds of political expediency, the Olympic Movement is not in search of a transcendental and decisive role on the international political scene! Simply, it is finally in a position to impose its independence by establish-

ing its autonomy. Speaking at the UN General Assembly, in New York, in November 2013, the IOC President, Bach, stressed the need for autonomy in sport: *"Sport is truly the only area of human existence that has achieved 'universal law'. Politics must respect this sporting autonomy ... the excellent relations between the UN and the IOC can in this respect serve as an example for the relations at national level between the National Olympic Committees and the national governments. This relationship with governments requires sport to always remain politically neutral".*<sup>11</sup>

Wanting to fully clarify the landscape in this relationship, the IOC President, in his speech at the opening of the Asian Games, in Incheon, South Korea, on 24 September 2014, stated: *"...in the past, some have said that sport has nothing to do with politics, or they have said that sport has nothing to do with money or business. And this is just an attitude which is wrong and which we cannot afford anymore. We are living in the middle of society and that means that we have to partner up with the politicians who run this world".*<sup>12, 13</sup>

Bach also used the universal application of competition regulations as an example of sports' ability to function as a form of international law helping promote global peace and development. He said that allowing countries to set their own rules, in football or athletics for example, would mean that *"international sport is over"*. He emphasised the real role of sports in the everyday life by saying *"...so we need this worldwide application of our rules to ensure also in the future that sport remains this international phenomenon which only sport can offer"*.

#### 4. Political motives and political intervention in sport

Sport as a concept and social action, along with the Olympic Games that represent its dominant expression after their successful revival by Coubertin, very soon became an object of substantial political exploitation at a national and international level. *"In fact, the links between sport and politics are so prominent and numerous that even the devoted idealist who wishes that the two spheres be separate, should be able to see, that there is a distinction between idealism and realism"* (Shaikin, 1998, p. 5).

The exploitation of sport by power players outside sports took on various

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.olympic.org/news/historic-milestone-united-nations-recognises-autonomy-of-sport>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.apnews.com/8fa01a7b258c4ad8b0e486d2237439b6>

<sup>13</sup> <https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/News/2018/02/opening-ceremony/President-speech-PyeongChang-2018-Opening-Ceremony.pdf>

forms, depending on the location and the time that this happened. The purpose of this study is not to analyse the forms that aim either at the personal promotion of the athlete (e.g. through doping) or promote the interests of commercial companies that have infiltrated the Olympic Movement for obvious reasons, but rather to explore the timeless relationship that affects sports and politics in both directions. In other words, to examine how domestic and international politics or even ideology comes across and the means that it employs, using sporting and particularly the events of the Olympic Movement, to transmit the messages it wants to promote to the public in order to gain its sympathy.

The history of the Movement is full of these forms of political exploitation, which emerged from the very first Athens Games, in 1896. However, there is a significant difference between the exploitation that is made for domestic policy reasons and that made for international promotion. Despite this clear differentiation, in many cases these two forms have no clear boundaries. For example, it is difficult to distinguish whether the great conflict of political regimes between the West (USA) and the East (Soviet Union) in the '60s and '70s was aimed at internally boosting the morale of the citizens of the two superpowers by seeking to win medals; or if it was intended for the international promotion of the political systems represented by those countries.

According to Houlihan (1994, pp. 8-9), *"...governments intervene in sport policy for a wide variety of reasons: some are concerned to achieve objectives that are primarily internal, such as fostering the development of sport as a sector of the leisure industry, or to improve the nation's health. By contrast, there are instances where a government's intention in intervening is directed at the achievement of foreign policy objectives, such as improving relations with other States.... It is not always clear, therefore, whether the focus or objectives of government intervention is internal or external. ... A policy that is overtly directed at one objective, for example fostering goodwill with another State, may have the covert objective of demonstrating superiority"*.

Within a State, sport is both an exercise and a spectacle. It is an integral part of everyday life and is strengthened in every way so that the benefits of the exercise of body and mind can shape the character of young people. If done correctly and methodically, engaging in sports is a special education that contains the principles and values that make up the concept of Olympism. In some societies, mass sport operates anarchically and unplanned, making it appear more like a game than a physical and mental exercise. However, whatever the form of mass



sport, society seems to be interested in elite sport and in what it offers not only to the athletes themselves, but also to those who are looking for a way to exploit it.

Those who can produce the best spectacle will attract more spectators, who soon will become voters. This is why, in most countries of the world, any party in power fervently wishes to control and manipulate sport. There are exceptions to this rule, but you can count them on the fingers of both hands and unfortunately, they confirm the rule that prevails in the rest of the world including Greece, the cradle of sport and Olympism.

Improving the level of sport in a country is undoubtedly credited more to the political leadership and less to the efforts made by the athletes themselves. It is natural for governments to want to use this improvement to attract voters by promoting their own model of governance! Collecting medals in world or Olympic contests is, to some extent, a reward for good planning in the sporting field and is used as proof of a sound sport policy.

So far, nothing seems wrong or weird. However, in many cases, the pursuit of this kind of reward, that is, seeking an ever-increasing number of awards, becomes an end in itself! It is here that the element of the pure exploitation of sport and of the athletes begins to become dangerous; using, in many cases, unfair ways of seeking the award and always to the detriment of the physical and mental health of the athletes.

The excerpt from Coubertin's speech at Antwerp City Hall, in August 1920, is characteristic: *"... without rejecting the value of regulations, we have to admit that sports cleansing mechanisms will always remain inadequate. A law has as much power as the person enforcing it. And here, too, what should concern us are the people. The management of sports clubs is very often in the hands of professional managers or politicians, people in general who have nothing to do with any sporting activity. The risks arising from this situation have often been highlighted... there may be other solutions, but this is certainly the most practical and most accessible: sports clubs must persistently keep their distance from anyone who offers to manage them and that, in essence, what he wants is to use the powers of others to build his political future or to promote his personal affairs"* (Muller, 2000, p. 225).

An important example of this policy is, of course, the case of former East Germany! In fact, in this particular case, the country's regime did not simply want to satisfy its citizens by offering a spectacle and records, but used the success of its athletes to develop international relations. However, to achieve success with

this sports programme, medical methods and banned substances which were very advanced for their time were used, and these had dramatic consequences for the athletes, as was revealed much later.

At the time, in East Germany, a controversial figure, Manfred Ewald, was appointed initially President of the Sports Confederation and later Minister of Sports and President of the NOC. He was in charge of all sports in the country, and the brain of the "sports miracle of East Germany. In 1988, he was removed from that position and in 1990 he published his autobiography entitled "I was the Sport". In 2001, he was sentenced by the German Supreme Court for promoting banned substances to athletes in East Germany throughout the time it dominated the sporting events of that country. During his trial, he claimed that his programme had been approved by the highest level of his government (Downes, 2002).

His "legacy" in the field of doping is still considered unique. As regards pharmaceuticals, for example, the legal supplement androstenedione was developed by the country's scientists as a bridge drug for the rapid removal from the body of steroids used by their athletes when they had to undergo a doping test (Carlson, 2002). Speaking at the 90th IOC Session, in Berlin, in 1985, Ewald, having already managed to keep his activities away from any suspicion of doping by athletes of East Germany for more than 20 years, focused his speech on the alleged risk of professionalisation and commercialisation of sport: *"... we support those who seek to prevent the professionalisation and commercialisation of the Olympic Games and who are resolutely opposed to any form of discrimination, unsporting behaviour and manipulation. The Olympic Movement should have a firm place in the hearts of all decent people and should inspire them to serve peace, friendship and understanding with young people worldwide. The NOC of East Germany is working for this purpose, trying to attract the support of all the citizens of our country to this high goal"* (Ewald, 1985).

The dynamics of sport and the evolution of the Olympic Games developed very rapidly. However, the different forms of their exploitation at an international level developed just as rapidly. Financial, commercial, medical policies and/or ideological trends have attempted and, to a large extent, succeeded in using the Olympic Games as a steppingstone towards achieving their objectives. It is true that sports events can contribute to spectacular, positive or negative, diplomatic developments where the "art of governance" has failed. They are used as prisms, through which states and persons attempt to promote their desired image to the rest of the world and their own people, and promote social changes in the host country.

The exploitation of sports and more specifically the Olympic Games by States, in order to promote an idea or a political view, or further on a political propaganda, has a timeless dynamic in the Olympic Movement, particularly up to the point when the technological development offered other means of promotion. In order to comprehend the importance and the power of the Olympic Games as an institution, each of the interventions that have taken place to date must, per force, also be correlated to the international political events of that era. For example, the urban revolution and new state of affairs in European societies around the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, as well as the two world wars that followed, obviously triggered a set of political changes which, in most cases, dramatically affected both the national growth of sport and the organisation of certain Olympic Games.

The era when the two super-powers, namely the US and the Soviet Union, dominated, the sixties and seventies up until 1984, showcased the rivalry between the political and economic systems of the East and the West.

Espy (1979, p. 26) describes the Soviet attitude of that period with clarity: *"... Olympic officials considered with trepidation the possibility of Soviet participation in the Olympic Movement and in international sport. They had only a vague knowledge of the sport movement in the Soviet Union and they expressed concern over whether the Soviet sport organisations would conform to Olympic rules. But their basic fear was of possible Soviet expansion into and manipulation of the Olympic Movement for its own purposes. This reflected the same general fear the West maintained regarding the Soviet Union. In the Olympics, of course, Russian manipulation and direct flouting of Olympic regulations would quickly and effectively undermine an essentially Western institution"*.

Up to 1952, the Soviet Union scorned the Games with the argument that they were a construct of western capitalism, but that year they reentered the Games organised in Helsinki, because they perceived the power of success in sports for promoting their political purposes and that sports could be used as a tool to reinforce the prestige of communist countries (Sage, 2010). That is, more or less, how the cold war began between the western and communist countries. Through its victories in international sports, the Soviet Union promoted the principle of national recognition and the prestige of a nation, united various nationalities under the Soviet identity and in that manner, during the second half of the 20th century, created a global model in that sector. The liberation movements in Africa and the anti-racist mobilisation observed worldwide in the sixties, seventies and

eighties engendered other forms of intervention in the institution of the Games, promoting principles and values in an unorthodox manner.

At this point, we should underscore and accept a general assumption that will assist in understanding how to deal with the problem analysed in this study and its ramifications. Sport, and by extension its Olympic expression, comply with a set of values, principles and commitments. The Olympic Movement is based on this web of positions, and its impact is at times positive and at other times negative. As a social philosophy, Olympism contains in its theoretical form all these Principles and Values; their implementation was assigned to an institution, namely the IOC, an organisation that is a special form of private entity, with a Charter, specific administrative bodies, rules of conduct and disciplinary law. The IOC is comprised of members who are elected not by the governments of the countries that are included in its purview, but instead by its own General Session. Its very nature renders it an organisation that is "international" but not "trans-national". This assumption often leads to conflicts between the Olympic Movement on the one hand and State priorities on the other. Whoever belongs to this institution must accept the rules it imposes and the practices that it follows. When they don't, they shall be subject to the consequences imposed by the "Olympic status quo"! Whoever disagrees with its practices is welcome to leave!

The entire edifice is based on this principle, that organised sports and the Olympics should in practice enjoy so-called "self-sufficiency" and "independence" from all forms of politics or other intervention in the manner in which they function. This assumption does not mean, of course, that the Olympic institution and political power do not overlap in many phases of their parallel histories, with either positive or negative ramifications. However, it is now recognised that, over time, conditions have changed and, whilst in its initial steps the Olympic Movement was obliged to diverge from the direction given by Coubertin and to cede to political expediencies, it has now gained full autonomy. In fact, it has become an interlocutor on an equal footing with the UN. A development that renders the Olympic Movement a dominant player in its relations with national political authorities.

In a historic speech to the UN General Assembly, in 1995, Samaranch emphasised the identity of the objectives of the two organisations and their cooperation on an equal footing in the field of peace and the defence of human rights.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Samaranch at the United Nations, *Olympic Review*: XXV, December-January (1995), pp. 4-7.

## 5. Why were the Olympic Games an attractive platform for political and/or ideological exploitation?

According to Sage (2010, p. 189), *"...The high visibility of international sport events has fostered a favourable climate for state intervention. Nations have increasingly forged direct propaganda links between sport triumphs and the viability of their political-economic systems. In this strategy, sport is an instrument of state policy that ties achievements of the nation's athletes to the country's political-economic system to promote the system's superiority. This has been called sports diplomacy, and the athletes used for this purpose have been labelled diplomats in sweat suits"*.

Some scholars limit themselves to describing cases as "political intervention" only when the State itself intervenes by means of specific official acts aimed either at harming the Olympic Movement or using it as a means of imposing their will on other States (boycott), or to promote the superiority of their own political-economic governance model. Thus, however, they neglect other forms of political or ideological activism that has developed strongly tarnishing the image of the Games.

As regards why the Olympic Games is considered an attractive platform to promote political or ideological positions, various views have been developed. Cottrell and Nelson (2011), describe them, in a comprehensive manner:

1. The Games is the jewel in the crown of sport events. The eyes of the entire world are riveted on them for an extensive period and the interest in their developments is widespread. Which other event, irrespective of content, is capable of drawing the interest of such a large number of people worldwide? Therefore, this focus is automatically transformed into the greatest multinational hive for broadcasting and receiving messages, and therefore shaping political or ideological positions. The participation of all nations, with athletes of all races and the ideal meeting of various cultures, in combination with the fact that persons of note are amongst the spectators, gives all participants an upgraded platform for their ideological messages.
2. In the past, the conduct of the Games and all things strange and noteworthy that came with them, comprised the main material of all newspapers and all types of printed press and international media, because they stirred the interest not only of those who loved sports, but also the public at large. After the second half of the 20th century, television started broadcasting the Games extensively and fully and even more importantly with its characteristic

immediacy, the importance of the institution was upgraded and at the same time the platform became an ideal means for transmitting messages.

3. The Games can increase the pressure on a host government or another country. Because of the high prestige of the event and its massive nature, protesters usually believe that they can raise people's awareness of their demands and create new alliances with individuals, networks, governments and other institutions. Moreover, especially in instances when protest demonstrations are aimed at the host government, protesters will use the Olympics in order to inform people about their specific policies and gradually increase internal and external pressure on the host country.
4. The Olympic Games can reduce the ability of the regime to repress collective claim-making in the first place. When States (and, again, particularly host States) are under the Olympic spotlight, the potential costs of an act of repression are substantially increased, thereby limiting options for repression and reducing direct resistance to claimants. As will be discussed below, both host States and the IOC still find ways to resist protest activities. But the nature of the modern Games makes it difficult to do so forcibly. Softer tactics are required.
5. Finally, the special symbolic meaning is attributed to the Games that facilitates collective claim-making and widens political opportunity. According to the Olympic Charter: *"The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity"*. It is precisely because of the universal and humanitarian mission outlined by the Charter, that protest in an Olympic context acquires the meaning it does.

It cannot be denied that there are many arguments in favour of ideological or religious positions being put forth through the Games. To deny this from the outset would be wrong. Tommie Smith, gold medallist at the 1968 Mexico Olympics, in his book, justifies the historic and controversial protest that he made on the winner's podium (which is presented in the following chapter), easily accepting this form of protest as "his moral obligation" to his fellow African-Americans and describes the need that he felt to support human rights in this manner. Rights that, in fact, the philosophy of Olympism supports. Rights that were blatantly violated in his homeland, the USA, where resistance to their oppression could be compared to a tidal wave, with the armed action of the proponents of the violent Malcolm X and the incendiary speeches of Martin Luther King, despite the differences in their adopted practices!

Who could claim, without being misunderstood, that Smith's act went against the grave sense of justice and that he should not have supported human rights against the racist policies adopted towards African-Americans by the political leadership for many years? This *"Silent Gesture"* by Tommie Smith and John Carlos left divided scruples and many questions, both for those who advocate continuous protests against racism, striving to highlight their issues at every opportunity and in any manner at their disposal, as well as for those who went by the book and believed that the Games are not the venue for any kind of political or ideological protests.

However, on the other hand, it is important to note that the Olympic Movement and the IOC Charter restrict the support they provide to human rights only to sporting activities. The Charter characteristically states the following in the Fundamental Principles:

*"4. The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practicing sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play".*

*"6. The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Olympic Charter shall be secured without discrimination of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status".*

Whatever side the well-intentioned interlocutor supports, they will arrive at the same impasse. However, as the aim of this book is to set out the events, thoughts, views and documented information, with respect to the Values and Principles of the Olympic Movement, the author urges readers to determine their own position on each controversial case.

## **6. Classifying international political interventions**

Classification of political interventions in the Olympic Games, as well as interventions by the Olympic Movement in transnational relations, first requires a thorough analysis of the main characteristics of such interventions. It would be wrong to attempt to make a one-sided analysis of the matter, viewing politics and their players as the sole driving factors in this relationship. This is because the Movement often appears to intervene in the international political scene or even in political events within a country, when it is considered that specific political choices are directed against its fundamental principles and values, but never for the opportunistic

exploitation of situations to achieve objectives other than those specified in the Charter. Obviously, what stands out the most in the parallel course that politics and sports have taken from the end of the 19th century to the present day, is the effort to take advantage of the sports movement and specifically the Olympic Games to serve political expediencies

This usually relates to the fact that we start from the simplistic assumption that sports are a purely social activity, whose only purpose is to improve body and mind; whilst the effort to attain perfection and excellence through the Games should not be exploited by external factors that seek to serve non-sports interests and other expediencies. However, it is wrong to limit ourselves to this approach because both sports and the Olympic Movement frequently used their influence and intervened in political developments, in order, in some instances to impose their Principles and in others to penalise political acts that did not comply with these Principles. Some of the interventions were considered positive, others negative.

Before we proceed to further analyse the forms of interventions observed in the 125 years of the modern Olympic Movement's existence, it would be expedient to distinguish the effects of politics in the Movement between "active" and "passive". Active are those that are expressed through a specific intervention of politics in the sporting milieu, i.e. the boycott policy deployed in the second half of the previous century. Passive are those that originate from an existing political situation, which gradually evolves independently of the sports event which, however, is inevitably affected i.e. Cold War policies between the US and the Soviet Union in the sixties.

In many of the instances set out below, interventions can combine more than one form, depending on the perspective of the analyst. In order to better grasp the importance of each intervention, it is good to attempt to understand not only the interventions per se, but also the general social and political backdrop, against which they occurred. These interventions could be classified based on:

- The intervention "agency".
- The "form" an intervention took.
- The "aim" of the intervention.
- The "result" of the intervention.

The intervention "agency" is, in some instances, a governmental or other form of collective action (e.g. boycotts, protests, recognition of a State, terrorism) and in others, an individual action (e.g. protest, propaganda) and in yet others, an action by the IOC itself (e.g. banning NOCs from the Games for political or humanitarian



reasons). The diversification of the agency is of great importance, because as an action in its collective form it carries greater weight.

The intervention "form" distinguishes between **positive**, when its aim is to improve a situation (e.g. gain recognition for a State, apply the Principles of the Olympic Movement) and **negative**, when the course of the Olympic Movement is adversely affected (e.g. boycotts, political or ideological protest, propaganda).

The "aim" of the intervention is analysed with great clarity by Parry and Girginov (2005), who used the classification introduced by Spotts (1994, pp. 115-119) and approached the sensitive issue of political interventions meticulously, covering the greater part of expedencies that these served. The analysis carried out by these distinguished scholars was used as the basis of the present study, attempting further more analytical diversification, in order to cover all aspects of the expedencies that pushed individuals, political and ideological entities, as well as the IOC itself, to undertake such actions. Based on their "aim", we can distinguish those interventions made with a view to:

- Gaining international political prestige (Berlin 1936 – Seoul 1988).
- Achieving national recognition (East Germany, Kosovo).
- Achieving national non-recognition (threat to boycott the Montreal Games against the Republic of China – Taiwan, 1976).
- Exercising specific political or ideological propaganda (Munich 1972).
- Promoting ideological protest (Mexico 1968).
- Imposing political views (Munich 1972 – Montreal 1976 – Moscow 1980 – Los Angeles 1984).
- Facilitating transnational cooperation (the case of the Ping – Pong diplomacy).
- Intervening in the process of human rights protection (South Africa and Rhodesia).
- Punishing a nation for humanitarian reasons (exclusion of Germany and its allies after World Wars I and II).

Finally, it is extremely interesting to differentiate between those interventions that were **successful** (e.g. where States were recognised, human rights defended), or **unsuccessful** (such as boycotts, terrorism) based on their result.

In the overwhelming majority of Games' events that took place up to a few years ago, a series of the aforementioned interventions, whose expedencies can be directly or indirectly discerned, threatened at certain points in time to change their sports and educational nature. Nevertheless, the Movement managed to survive;

without, however, escaping negative criticism, mainly by those who believed, and still do, that policy and ideology must exploit every opportunity to publicise and promote their views so that their ideas can be communicated to an ever-increasing number of people. This is particularly important when the specific intervention concerns human rights advocacy through the Games.

Let us take as an example an event, an initiative of ideological and political importance, which was discussed more than any other in the history of the Games and for which much has been written. The well-known gesture of Tommy Smith and John Carlos on the podium at the 1968 Mexico Games. If this gesture is interpreted in the light of the general condemnation of human rights violations and racial discrimination, it is undoubtedly a courageous act. Who could argue otherwise? The publicity of an anti-democratic policy of racism in an otherwise democratic society, such as the US, continues to be of great concern to a large number of authors, political analysts and scholars. If, however, the same gesture is interpreted in the light of the rules governing the Olympic Movement, which are reflected in the Charter, accepted by all those who believe in its Principles and Values and participate in it either as athletes or as players, it will obviously be considered as a blatant violation of them, since any expression of political or ideological content is expressly prohibited during the Games.

Two interpretations and two diametrically opposed positions! Most, however, accept that despite the seriousness of the message conveyed by the gesture of the two athletes and the emotional force it created in favour of condemning the policy of the US society against blacks in their country, the space, the way and the moment it occurred were wrong!

Coubertin had already identified this risk in the very first years of the history of the Games. However, the momentum created by the IOC and the strong resistance that prevailed vis-à-vis such phenomena, in support of autonomy for sports, gradually reduced the tendency to politicise the Games. This was also helped along by the fact that, slowly but surely, with gradual advances in technology and the creation of other forms of public promotion, the Games ceased to be the sole opportunity for publicising ideological and political positions.

However, in order to be fair, we have to admit that the IOC itself has supported semantic elements that have reinforced this trend through time, and which were conceptually distorted in order to serve a different purpose each time, usually with no connection with the true meaning of the Games, and that helped promote athletic chauvinism. We are referring to the:

1. Athlete's oath: "In the name of all the competitors, I promise that we shall take part in these Olympic Games for **the honour of our country** and the glory of sport".
2. Playing of the victor's **national anthem**.
3. Raising the flags of gold, silver and bronze Olympic medallists at a **different height**.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to include the above formal provisions of the Charter, as "interventions" in the general course of the Movement, the reason being that even now, Olympic athletes have especially close ties to their States and flags.

*"The structure of the Olympic Games, from the outset, prevented the ideal from becoming a reality. By identifying the athletes with their respective States, each athlete was subordinated to the State as its contestant. The athletes were not adjudged as individuals. Inevitably they were identified as representatives of their States. The propaganda value became readily apparent when the prowess of an athletic feat was rewarded under a national banner while a national anthem played, but the States did not originate the idea of such national identification. The Olympic officials were responsible. Whether or not the Olympic officials intended such an emphasis, they structured their Games and organisations along nationalistic lines, thereby enhancing the inherent potential for nationalism. States merely capitalised on and supported an idea that was to their benefit" (Espy, 1979, p. 163).*

There are two schools of thought regarding linking athletes to the State they represent and to what extent this facilitates political intervention in the Games. One theory, which is predominant in the Olympic family, holds that showcasing an Olympic success gives visibility to the NOC, which reflects a State, creating an incentive for sports to develop in that country.

Furthermore, there is also an emotional element that urges athletes to achieve their goals so that they can become a symbol within their country, as was the case in ancient times, with the acclaim Olympic medallists encountered in their city-States. In those times, citizens would demolish their city walls to receive the victors, considering it a great honour to have such representatives in the greatest celebration of sport and culture. Today, the Olympic acclaim of athletes in each delegation reflects on the State that they represent and the athletes themselves are transformed into role models for the young people of their country. The image of Olympic medallists upon winning proudly displaying their country's flag on the sporting field, in their desire to show-off where they belong, is typical.

The other theory, which gradually takes shape is less practical and could even be termed romantic. However, the idea that it that it may prevail in the future cannot be ruled out. According to this theory, records will soon be abolished, allowing athletes to enjoy their event without the pressure of having to surpass some performance or other athletes forcing them to employ techniques and means to improve their physical capabilities, which go against the Olympic Value of pursuing excellence. This important Value does not ask of athletes to become better, stronger or more efficient than their opponent, but rather to attain "excellence" in their own capacities, without requiring enhancement by other means. Without a doubt, the concept of "victory" existed, exists and will continue to exist in all pursuits of athletes, however, it cannot become an end in itself.

Kenneth Clarke (1988, p. 112), Director of the U.S. Olympic Committee, in a speech at the IOA 28th Session for Young Participants, in 1988, expressed the view that *"nationalism" as a divisive force can be combated with the correct orientation, that is, if it is characterised as "patriotism" and if it is interpreted as a positive force. The citizens of a country are obviously proud of the successes of their countrymen, whom they have supported by all possible means in their efforts to achieve victory. The national anthem of the gold medallist's country is played in recognition of the athletes themselves and not the country they represents.*

In an article published in the Figaro newspaper, in January 1903, Coubertin foresaw the risk inherent in athletes attempting to surpass their strength, thus destroying the educational nature of sports: *"...not everyone, however, appreciates the educational value of the expression, and bringing these two ideas – education and records – together will certainly seem a daring move. A record, you see, is considered the quintessence of effort. Therefore, it is viewed as extraordinary harmful in a time when our quest for the average tends to gain the upper hand over our thirst for perfection. This is a mistake. Records can be put to excessive use, but taken by themselves, they are less prone to exaggeration than is competition. The reason is simple. Competition places you into a struggle, making you another living being's competitor. A record faces you up against an inanimate fact, a figure, a measure of space or of time. Strictly speaking, you are fighting only with yourself.*

*Your ambition and will are your only driving force. You can lose your control over them momentarily, and they can manage to get the better of you, only in a rapid sort of intoxication that is hardly enough to cancel out your body's warning signals. In short, you are on your own. Imagine how different your state of mind*

would be if in front, behind, and beside you, other sets of muscles and other brains were working away, their very presence upsetting and overtaxing your nerves. Your analysis, your measurements of their strength, and your knowledge of their habits, advantages and weaknesses will be all for naught; you remain at their mercy. The race that you enter into, then, is inspired and directed in large measure not by your muscles and brain, but by muscles and brains of the competitors whose victory threatens your own.

*You must have exceptional natural poise and plenty of experience to remain in complete control of yourself under such circumstances. That is where the risk of forcing yourself, an eloquent popular term, comes in. To force yourself does not mean making yourself do something. It means unconsciously going beyond the limits of what can be achieved without risk" (Müller, 2000, p. 160).*

An effort in this direction was made by the Youth Olympic Games where, for the first time in international events, performances are not recorded as records. Athletes prepare to compete with their rivals without looking to outdo the respective performance of previous Games. The official reason given for not recording performances was that it is not solely a sports event, but a broader cultural event.

The advocates of this view believe that gradually the flag of the States of the winners should cease to be raised at different heights, depending on their place, and the national anthem be replaced by the Olympic Anthem. This will mean that many side effects and interventions in the image of the Games from a political expediencies' standpoint will be avoided.

Nonetheless, although this may appear to be an attractive approach for certain ideologists of Olympism, it is impractical and unrealistic. With the passage of time, the Games has also become, besides a celebration of sports and culture, a source of various professional activities that depend on the spectacle of delivering records and breaking them and showcasing the nation through the athletes' success. Perhaps at some future point in time, the individuality of an athlete participating in Olympic competition will be more important than showcasing their country of origin.

Characteristically, Coubertin himself, despite his romantic nature, did not even consider disconnecting performances and national prestige from the Games. It seems that it was too early to ascertain where performances would lead. Even though in his comments he underscores a certain risk, without a doubt, he was a proponent of national/State promotion, as his entire theory of revival of the

Olympic Games was based precisely on their “internationalist” form. In assessing the 1896 Games, the first in modern times, he noted: “...One may be filled with a desire to see the colours of one’s club or college triumph in a national meeting, but how much stronger is the feeling when the (sic) colours of one’s own country are at stake...! It was with these thoughts in mind that I sought to revive the Olympic Games. I have succeeded after many efforts... ... (I hope) it may be a potent, if indirect, factor in securing international peace” (Müller, 2000, p. 360).

## **7. Sport and politics in the Interwar years**

World War I was a cross-over point for sport, from the years of innocence that characterised its idealistic approach by Coubertin, to a new era, during which, even though its contribution was recognised as a means for social education, it became a tool for political exploitation within the borders of the State, as well as beyond.

In contrast with the limited extent to which sports was used for political expediency on an international level during the first years of the Olympic Movement, the new political and ideological trends developed during the Interwar years (1918 – 1939) fully exploited the potential of sports, especially within the State, as a tool for promoting ideological and political messages in the new societies being shaped.

In Europe, the entire sports edifice changed radically, especially after the policies that the totalitarian regimes sought to exercise domestically in Germany and in post-Tsarist Russia, in Czechoslovakia, as well as Italy and Spain.

The empires of Germany and Tsarist Russia were overturned almost at the same time and two new political systems emerged in their stead espousing diametrically opposed ideologies. The German revolution, in 1918, and the Weimar Constitution, in 1919, replaced the Empire of Wilhelm II. A few years later, Germany would go through Nazi domination and the Olympic Movement would experience one of its greatest downfalls with the 1936 Berlin Games. At the same time, Mussolini, in Italy, used sports domestically to a great extent as a vehicle for promoting the Fascist ideology. On the other side of Europe, after the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, the Communist Soviet Union replaced Tsarist Russia, overturning the policy of the previous regime, which was in favour of the “bourgeois” nature of sports practised by the Westerners, as they used to call them, and which also shaped how they viewed the Olympic Games, the foremost expression of the Olympic Movement. Czechoslovakia became independent after the fall of the Tsarist Empire, replacing Bohemia politically.

## In the US...

Sports in the US took on a substantial role in education, through a general reform of the educational system. Initially, sports acted as an alternative and dynamic solution to war. Starting approximately in 1870 and for 50 years, many advocated sports as a means of rebuilding society with strong democratic values in a nation that had been thoroughly shaken by the Civil War and was coming to grips with the social malaise that came on the heels of the first manifestations of a modern way of life. C. Young (2005, p. 9) called it a "Sporting Republic": *"... the invention and dissemination of organised sport originated from a critical mass of thinkers, as a technology that would showcase all the positive elements of war [...] strong vitality [...], civic participation, greater purpose, dedication to great ideals, dynamic nationalism, an exciting life through abundance, which could be considered the moral equivalent of the war"*.

After World War I, the way that sports were viewed in the US changed. In the '20s, it became a way of life (with a crowd of spectators, great media coverage and even more schools incorporating it in their curricula together with gymnastics and physical education, chiefly as a method of military training). Factors that contributed to its theoretical foundation being undermined were: the scale of the war, which weakened the concept of "sport"; the commercialisation of sport and its second phase of development, which is considered a given fact (Dyreson, 1998). However, the unabated strength of the Olympic narrative, in parallel with the will of certain US supporters to present it as unchanged, resulted in the consolidation of the positive aspects of sports.

In contrast to Fascist Italy and Germany after 1933, sports policy was not dictated by the US government. US sports stakeholders had to cultivate the ground themselves for propagating democracy through sports.

The 1932 Los Angeles Games were able to survive because their award, scheduling and the greater part of their funding had been secured prior to the world sinking into the major economic crisis at the end of the '20s. This success gave the US media an opportunity to promote the prosperity of their country and its athletic superiority and, through their own model, the pre-eminence of their country compared to the new regimes that had emerged in Europe. In an era where the number of sports fans that followed baseball games had fallen by half, the Games attracted sufficient interest to be profitable. As Dyreson (1995, p. 23) explained: *"...the Olympics were an opportunity for the Americans to narrate their personal experiences to their compatriots, as well as the international public"*.

Sport was widespread in schools and universities, with modifications to the syllabus and with a minimal contribution by the State to its development – albeit with the political leadership in power strongly capitalising on the positive results attained by US athletes in international competitions. Consequently, sports were taken very seriously. British journalist, Montague Shearman, accompanied the combined Oxford and Cambridge track and field team in their first competition with Harvard and Yale in the US and gave a detailed report in *The Badminton Magazine*, noting: *“...how is it possible for Americans to have so much better results, whilst the persons proposed for the selection are so few? [...] These results are the product of a system that has almost universal application throughout the country [...]. This system is comprised of clubs and colleges. As soon as the selection of the persons who will represent the club in a sport is made, the club will undertake their training, cover their expenses, including accommodation and provide well paid and capable trainers to teach them the sport [...] in a comprehensive and scientific manner.[...] It would be very dumb on behalf of the British to ignore the lesson taught to them by America [...]. Sport is entertainment, not business: however, whatever deserves to be done, deserves to be done well”* (Young, 2005, p. 8). From the revival of the Games until the end of the '20s, US always sent the largest delegations and won the most medals, therefore holding the leading position in international sports.

This was the model of sports which Carl Diem<sup>15</sup>, the famous German theoretician and Olympism devotee, attempted to bring to the new Germany of Weimar, after his two trips to the US; however, the Nazis had other goals, which became apparent immediately after Hitler prevailed and the Nazi regime was imposed.

In the first two decades of the 20th century, black athletes were banned from organised sporting events for whites. However, after 1932, their access to common sport organisations and international events created a different environment, which showcased the superiority of the US in the international sporting field. Thanks to this change in domestic policy, the public was enthralled by their successes, a fact that counterbalanced the racist social policy, to which they had been subjected for many decades.

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16 Carl Diem was a great sports personality during the period of Nazi Germany, a friend of Coubertin and a fervent philhellene. Although he himself does not seem to have been a fanatical sympathizer of Nazism (without being opposed to it), he was in charge of the organization of the 1936 Berlin Games. Together with Ioannis Ketseas they inspired the creation of the International Olympic Academy in Ancient Olympia.



### **In Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy...**

In the Interwar period in Europe, political developments took place at a very swift pace and after the World War I sport spread beyond the European Anglophile circles, raising awareness amongst all working classes. Due to its simplicity it was the perfect medium to promote identity and political views. Despite their claims of political independence, sports and fascism "joined forces" because both were in favour of a "modern" way of life, approached in an entirely different manner of course.

Referring to the consequences of the Great War and the image that the sports movement presented in the Interwar period, Goldblatt (2018, p. 97) characteristically wrote: *"..over the next decade, the Olympic Movement would be subject to an assault both on an ideological and institutional level. On the one hand, it was obvious that the war had seriously weakened the Olympic Movement, but on the other hand, the political and cultural impact of the conflict caused powerful new options and opponents"*.

During the Weimar Republic, Germany had one of the most developed sports systems in the world. Participation rose exponentially, sports clubs proliferated, whilst many new and modern premises were built, which served as an example to other countries. Initially, the Nazis were hesitant to promote sports, but from the moment they understood that they could be used for propaganda purposes they gave their full support to the sport movement.

Hitler had already determined in his book *Mein Kampf* (1924) the purpose of the Nazi form of physical education, which he envisioned: a youth in his Germany had to be strong as steel, resilient as leather and fast as a "whippet".<sup>16</sup> However, before the change in the educational system was affected, from what was considered a low level of exercise to a form of strong physical education, all the sports organisations and associations had to come under the political control of the new sports leadership of the Reich, losing their independence (Naul, 2002). The support provided for sports, physical education and bodily care (e.g. medicine) was immediately linked to visions for a "world order". This also explains why the members of fascist States tried to be elected to international sports bodies; often successfully. In countries such as Germany, where the State played a central role in the organisation and support of citizens' social activities, we should not wonder why sports officials sought out the support of public organisations.

The idea that sports reinforced personal fortitude continued to apply after the Great War, but the perception that sports revitalised society was increasingly

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<sup>16</sup> A breed of dogs known for their speed.

losing ground, whilst many serious scholars started abandoning their research into sport (Dyreson, 1997). The large scale of the preceding war, which had weakened the concept of "sports" and their subsequent commercialisation, resulted in the second phase of its development, which contributed to the undermining of sports' theoretical foundation.

Boltz (2016, p. 55), analysing the Fascist movement's interference in sports, notes: *"...Irrespective of their sporting heritage, fascist movements considered sport as an educational means for accomplishing another target. Their programmes pursued the physical and spiritual strengthening of their people. Of course, the new leaders considered it the duty of each individual to exercise in order to remain in good physical condition to be able to represent and serve their country. The pressure was quite obvious. For example, students in Germany were obliged to successfully complete sport trials if they wanted to continue with their studies. This is why propaganda – in the sense of mass education (or Volksaufklärung, as the Goebbels' Ministry was called) – comprised such a material element of fascist regimes"*.

Hitler, taking advantage of the fact that during the Weimar Republic Berlin was appointed to organize the 1936 Olympic Games, tried to promote the superiority of the Aryan race during the Games. He interpreted this assignment of the Games as praise for the Nazis' status. He even directed the earnings from the Games' to the Krupps military industry, which was the main supplier of the Nazis' regime (Keys, 2006).

The achievements of the Revolution in the new Germany had to be visible, especially in sports where successes were immediately broadcast, as was the case with the organisation and promotion of the 1936 Games. Leni Riefenstahl, a famous film director of that era, recorded the Games in an amazing manner, a propaganda film, titled *"Olympia"*, which even today is considered to be a real work of art. Sports in Germany experienced a different "industrial revolution", which was however important for the ideology of the Nazis, in which the fascist regimes participated fully and took advantage of this development.

The Berlin Games gave the Ministry of Propaganda of the Third Reich an excellent opportunity, to falsely present a positive relationship between sports, arts and politics, which, as Goebbels claimed, was developed in Nazi Germany. *"Sports in Germany experienced a different "industrial revolution", which was however important for the ideology of the Nazis, in which the fascist regimes participated fully and took advantage of this development"* (Collins, 2013, p. 86).

As Large (2007, p. 113), notes, *"... the Nazi ideology initially displayed superciliousness towards the Coubertin rhetoric, based on the pure connection of peaceful competition and good will and in parallel the lack of any racial and political discrimination. They caustically referred to the Olympic Games as an institution that was "fake and engineered", whose aim was to reinforce the war of the Bolsheviks against the white race (!). Nevertheless, a close relationship was developed between the Nazi views on the master race and the opportunity offered by the Games for world-wide visibility. Hitler had become fully convinced that the Games were an event to showcase his ideology and decided to provide huge sums from the State coffers in order to make them into a "great spectacle and political theatre".*

Just two weeks before the Opening Ceremony, the National Socialists had become the most powerful political party in the German Parliament. Five months later, they were in power, ushering in an important increase in international sport meetings (from around 20 a year by the end of the '20s to 60 between 1933 and 1939), where the regime tried to convince the international audience of its peaceful nature and superiority. After the 1936 Games, a dual approach was adopted: alongside promoting international sport, efforts were increasingly made to control international federations (C. Young, 2005).

In the same era, in fascist Italy, the Italian team ranked second in the medal table of the 1932 Los Angeles Games and organised the Football World Cup in 1934, they grasped the dynamic influence that sport could have on Mussolini's propaganda and the benefits to be gained from cultivating sports, in accordance with the standards of their ideology.

Fascist movements in Italy and, to a smaller degree, in Spain, fixated on changing the habits of their population and training athletes, who would faithfully serve fascism. Education was the key, with which to implement the Revolution. *"New Man was the product of fascist education that gave equal weight to body and mind development. However, the alignment of sport and fascism was not immediate, but was gradually achieved"* (Bolz, 2016, p. 55).

The 1934 football World Cup in Rome and the 1936 Berlin Games were exactly the opportunities that these regimes had been waiting for to prove, on the one hand to their own people, and on the other hand to the whole world, that the fascist sports policy they implemented had produced great athletes and also officials who were capable of organising major events. They considered that, in this manner, they had enhanced their diplomatic prestige on the international political stage.

## **In the Soviet Union...**

In addition to radical change, the Bolshevik Revolution that ousted Russian Imperial rule brought about sweeping change in sport, not only as a concept, but also with respect to its very substance. The pro-bourgeois development of sport that had resulted in the previous situation, which was similar to western standards, was gradually reversed, changing to a pro-labour and militarist development, placing sport in the service of the new ideology. However, this change was not only limited domestically to the Soviet Union, but an effort was made to transmit this new landscape to other European countries, without great success.

Goldblatt (2018, p. 97) describes this change as follows: *"...first of all, the political and cultural landscape of the industrialised world was transformed by the Russian Revolution. Everywhere, the traditional political and social hierarchies were broken. Labour contested the rule of capital. Women contested the rule of men. Mass cultures and new communication technologies threatened the fine arts. Everyone had a sporting dimension. In Europe, the sports movement of workers increased speedily in size and ambition and in the '20s managed to organise the Workers' Olympiads, on a scale that surpassed anything that the IOC had managed to that point"*.

There are not many authors and scholars who have studied the shaping of this new sporting landscape in the Soviet Union in the Interwar years. Perhaps the most important amongst them is James Riordan, who attempted a deeper analysis of the social change brought by the Revolution in 1917. According to Riordan (1978, p. 16), *"...when the Bolsheviks came to power, they found a country on the verge of economic collapse. The civil war and foreign interventions accelerated and intensified the radical reforms to the economy and politics. The period from 1917 to 1920 featured an intense trend to "militarise" sport with the creation of a new universal system of physical education and sport, which Bolshevik educators had proposed before the Revolution. Sport was placed at the service of supporting the new regime, without importance being attached to performance and results, as this was what characterised the "bourgeois" form of sport in Western societies. In essence, during this period, known as War Communism, sport was adapted to the needs of war"*.

In the years that followed the death of Lenin (1921-1929), the Soviets refused, for ideological reasons, to participate in the Games of the Interwar period and started developing a different sports model, concentrated on "physical culture" as a means for shaping a new Soviet vision. This period was decisive not only as regards the form of sport, which was imposed upon citizens, but also the future of the entire Soviet society in many aspects of its daily life. However, developments

in sport were the subject of on-going discussions. There were disagreements as regards the role of sports in the workers' State, its organisational structure, with various groups trying to exert their influence. In essence, this was more a period for cultivating the body rather than sports, with the element of competition being the dividing line between the two.

In the '30s, the economy started getting back on track and industrial production realised the greatest expectations of the regime, sweeping the whole country into an immense campaign to "construct socialism", which would result in the forced collectivisation of agriculture, converting the USSR from an underdeveloped rural country into an industrial one, albeit "lacking in balance". The impact of these economic developments, in the new "industrialisation framework" of the country, were extremely important for the sports movement. The structure of today's Soviet sport was built in the '30s and its key role and functions in society were shaped at that time and even though in the previous decades physical education had predominated, in the '30s competitive sport prevailed. Many forms of competitive sport (football, basketball, volleyball) developed attracting crowds of spectators and pushing for the creation of clubs, stadiums, cups, championships, opinion polls, the cult of sport idols; characteristics of a subsystem that sought the mass entertainment of a rapidly increasing urban population (Riordan, 1978).

At the same period, Soviet leaders developed a more utilitarian attitude toward sports and physical culture as a means to mobilize and socialize the population, to build industry and prepare for the possibility of war, hence competitive sports began to gain favour as part of Stalin's industrialization drive. Soviet athletes became analogous to the Stakhanovite "labour heroes" who were rewarded for meeting and surpassing the production goals established by the five-year plans, receiving awards and prestige for sporting achievements and serving as role models for Soviet youth (Parks, 2009).

As Gleaves and Llewellyn (2018) aptly observe, all Soviet sports facilities and clubs came under the absolute control of the State and the athletes were transformed into "ambassadors of socialism", tasked with the responsibility of bringing international prestige to the Soviet Union. Soviet athletes received sinecures for factious work in the armed services or State industries. Many were also State-supported full-time students through their entire athletic careers. Under Stalin's regime, winning was absolutely necessary to justify participation in international competitions. Defeat threatened the entire propaganda message and the Soviets left no stone unturned in pursuing of victory.

This was the time when the regime perceived the importance of sport in promoting the communist ideology and in showing off its superiority compared to “bourgeois” capitalist society. Despite the fact that they continued to oppose the widespread competitive forms of sport (international games, world cups, Olympic Games), they sought, through their own approach to sport, to promote the strength of the workers and the new structure of society. The organisation of regional workers’ games or the mass sport displays did not last long. Gradually, the objective of the Soviets transitioned from the introspective pursuit of adilyntly shaping society into a search for global recognition of the prowess of their athletes, which would also be a recognition of the “superior model” of the modern communist society.

These very brief examples of the cultural dimensions of sport in the US, Germany and the Soviet Union illustrate that sport had already been politicised for various reasons and at different rates. They do indicate, however, that the Games neither caused sport to be politicised (even though they were often the vector that expressed this politicisation), nor – as can be easily assumed – were they assaulted and manipulated in Berlin by a perpetrator that had until then been unknown.

By the end of the 19th century, when modern sports made their appearance in Europe, their huge popularity, development and internationalisation were factors that contributed to the unavoidable reinforcement of their political dimensions. This, of course, contrasted with the political narrative that Olympism always maintained regarding a fundamental political altruism. *“The Games claim to be “un-political” was a discursive tactic, that has ensured their survival”* (C. Young, 2005, p. 11).

Finally, to what extent did this political approach, which the US and the totalitarian regimes espoused and sought to impose upon their societies, succeed? In the US, the development of sport through clubs and universities in the Interwar period remained unchanged until our days, placing more emphasis on the involvement of private initiative. It is worth stating that, although racial discrimination permeated the entirety of American society throughout all these intervening years and even today, it was never transferred to the sports sector.

When the fascist regimes collapsed after World War II, the democratic governments that had taken in hand the fate of national sport, both in Federal Germany as well as in Italy and Spain, divested it fully from political expediency, leaving it to grow through democratic procedures and follow the same course that other European western societies had set prior to them.

Things developed differently in the Soviet Union. After World War II, the sport

policy that had been developed and which had over many years distanced itself from western culture, refusing to identify with the bourgeois image of the sports movement in Europe, was changed with a view to expanding in the international environment. However, when they finally realised the political gain to be garnered from becoming re-integrated, they decided to return to the Olympic Movement in 1951, accepting the Principles that govern it, whilst also capitalising on the benefits offered by the Movement's penetration in free societies.

## **8. The IOC's intervention of "political" nature affecting the Olympic Games and the Movement**

It is a fact that, despite the successive interventions of politics in sporting events, the Olympic Movement gradually acquired a special dynamic in the settlement of much political opposition, starting from a very early stage. Already, from the middle of the last century, it became clear how positive the role of the Movement could be in political matters when, through a series of realistic actions by the IOC addressed to governments and NOCs, light was shed on another side of the Olympic Movement. In no small number of cases, the IOC intervention in political events was considered to be positive, thus making the Institution a critical player on the international political scene.

Turning to the relation between sport and politics, Lambis Nikolaou, IOC Member for Greece, in 1994, during the IOC Centennial Congress for Unity, pointed out that, if politics was indeed war by other means, as Clausewitz had suggested, then sport was part of those means.<sup>17</sup> Whatever the energy expended to turn sport into a fair and disinterested activity, a symbol of peace and brotherhood between the peoples of the world, reality was different, and matters had to be considered in their true light. Thus, the only solution appeared to lie in greater reciprocity between sport and politics. In this way, politics could adopt the Principles of sport – fair play, fair competition and the acceptance of defeat. Since the complete emancipation of sport from politics was deemed to be impossible, the only alternative consisted in achieving better sport through better politics.

An attempt to present the contribution of sports and specifically that of the Olympic Movement to shaping the political conditions in the margins of a broader international political conflict is made in the cases analysed below.

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<sup>17</sup> Centennial Olympic Congress Report, 1994.

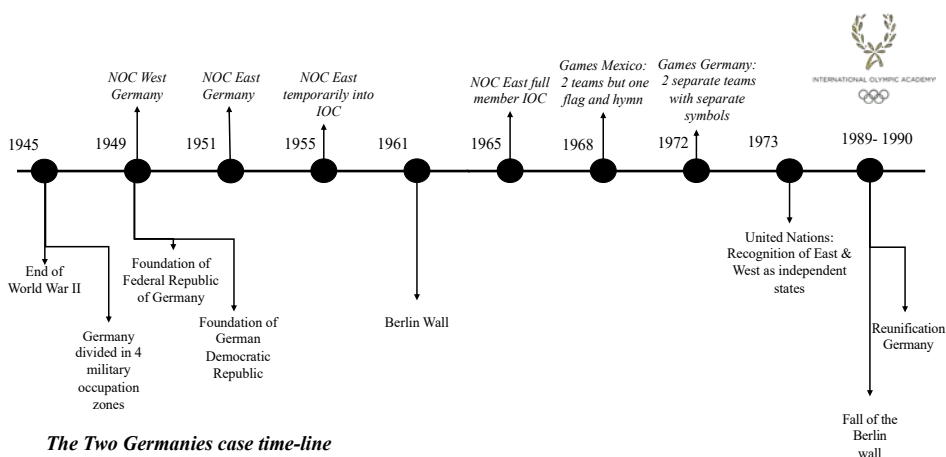
Such intervention is not specific to a particular Olympic Games staged; however, the developments triggered had an unavoidable impact on certain Games.

The author includes in the following selected cases a time-line table showing the major crucial dates related to each one of these cases, drafted by students of the IOA's Master's Degree Program (2019/2020 & 2020/2021), which has been finally edited by Dimitris Regalos.

## IOC's Positive intervention

### a. The "two Germanies"

After World War II, the IOC faced a series of geopolitical situations for which it was obviously not prepared at all. Following the global upheaval, some regions of the Olympic world went through a period of political uncertainty, which led to opposing political groups taking responsibility for Olympic issues in controversial geographical regions. Such a problem arose in Europe when Germany was divided into separate ideological spheres of influence. One of the most important interventions of sport and the Olympic Movement in shaping a new political situation was the recognition of East Germany as an independent sporting power, even before it was recognised by the UN as an independent State.



In 1950, anti-German sentiment had noticeably subsided in Europe and the IOC once again accepted the German NOC within the Olympic Movement. However, after a while, a group of East German sports fans approached the IOC asking for the recognition of their own, separate NOC. The IOC members were faced with



a dilemma, since, according to the Olympic Charter, only one NOC per country could be recognised and most members considered that, at least in sports, the two parts of Germany were essentially one country. Germany's unified representation in the Games would preoccupy the IOC for the next two decades (McDonald, 1995).

Since the first years of East Germany's foundation, the Socialist Unity Party had launched a strong propaganda campaign to bring the whole of Germany under the control of the Eastern bloc. Avoiding any effort to compromise with the West, it had hoped that, with the huge propaganda campaign it had started, it would be able to move West Germany and West Berlin away from their allies. The German Sports Committee (Deutscher Sportausschuss), founded in 1948, with the approval of the Soviet Military Administration, aimed to represent the sport of East Germany and promote unity between East and West Germany with the motto *"All Germans at the same table"*!

In an effort to support East-West sport relations through this doctrine, Waldemar Borde, the first head of the German Sports Committee, stated in 1965: *"...the only German championships that satisfy us are those that showcase... the best athletes from all provinces and all zones...the Democratic Movement for Sport fights against the efforts of the American imperialists and their peoples to separate Germans from Germans..."* (Ihmels, 1965, p. 106).

However, these excessive friendly statements of the East German sports elite were at the same time associated with attempts to discredit West Germany in order to bring its sports family face to face with its political leadership. The government of West Germany had always been accused of tensions and misunderstandings between East and West and of deceiving the West German population. Walter Ulbricht, first secretary of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party, speaking at the 7th Congress of the German Sports Committee, on 15 January 1951, stated: *"... we must use every contact with West German athletes to influence them and resist jointly the re-militarisation of Germany. Every individual sports club in West Germany must be convinced that we must fight together for peace"*.

In West Germany, such statements were immediately seen as an attempt to incite internal unrest and propaganda. On 22 April 1951, the Socialist Unity Party founded the NOC of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), which sparked a new political controversy. The Socialist Unity Party argued that one of its main objectives would be *"...to make every effort to establish, in cooperation with the National Olympic Committee of the Federal Republic, a common National Olympic Committee for the whole of Germany"* (Carr, 1980, p. 41).

Even though East and West Germany had been split ideologically and politically, in the beginning of the fifties there was still hope in the folds of the IOC that the two regions would be united again, which explains its reluctance to consider the two Germanies as distinct. Furthermore, it was clear that any recognition of the East Germany NOC by the IOC would result in an even greater political problem, because it would be considered as the recognition of a State, which had not yet been recognised by the UN or by many western countries during the first decades of the Cold War.

At the 45th Session of the IOC, the application for recognition of the Federal Republic of Germany's NOC was unanimously accepted, and the application of the Soviet Union was approved with few objections (31 votes in favour and three abstentions). The application for recognition of the East German NOC, which followed that of the Soviet Union, was rejected. The IOC, in accordance with its Charter, could not recognise a separate NOC representing part of a divided but single country, in which there was already one NOC, that of West Germany.<sup>18</sup>

The decision to invite Germany was not simple. It had been preceded by a heated IOC Session, in Vienna, in 1951, in which the situation in Germany was extensively debated. Questions were raised about whether the two German IOC members elected prior to its partition would have to change or remain unchanged. The Duke of Mecklenburg had to step down, due to the age limit, paving the way for Dr Karl Ritter von Halt to remain, a decision which, in fact, was reached by the then IOC President without putting it to the vote (Hill, 1992, p. 34). Many efforts were made in the same Session, mainly by Constantin Andrianov, the Soviet Union's IOC member, to recognise East Germany's right to participate in the Helsinki Games separately from West Germany.

The IOC asked the East German authorities to allow athletes to participate under the West German flag, which they rejected, seeking to participate in the Games as a separate team. The IOC refused, claiming that the only recognised Olympic Committee was that of West Germany and that its Charter explicitly stated that only one Olympic Committee is recognised for each country. East Germany had not yet been recognised by the UN as a separate State and as a result it could not be represented through its own NOC. This argument was forcefully rejected by certain IOC members, who invoked other similar cases, such as the NOC of Finland, which had been annexed by the Russian Empire, in 1809.

*"Despite this failure, the two NOCs met with the IOC in Lausanne, Switzerland, on 21 and 22 May 1951, where the IOC reiterated that only one NOC could*

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18 Minutes of the 45th IOC Session, 1951, Vienna.

*represent Germany. The West Germans, their own NOC already having been recognised, successfully resisted the accession of the NOC of East Germany to the IOC. At the same meeting, Carl Ritter von Halt, representing West Germany, and Kurt Edel, representing East Germany, were willing to agree that a joint German team would represent Germany at the 1952 Games and the best athletes would be selected regardless of whether they lived in East or West Germany. This agreement proved to be short-lived. Upon their return, the representatives of East Germany, Kurt Edel and Kurt Scharch, were strongly accused of losing political face. In a statement, the Socialist Unity Party rejected the Lausanne Agreement and stated that the athletes of East Germany would participate in the 1952 Games only on condition that their own NOC was recognized"* (Carr, 1980, p. 43).

This curious state of affairs was not fated to last, as East Germany intended to develop its own sports model, which differed from that of West Germany. A model which, as ultimately proved, was based on medical intervention and the extensive use of banned substances by athletes who, with their amazing performances during the Cold War, created a sports miracle, ranking their country among the strongest sports powers in the world! This was also invoked by the architect of sports policy of East Germany, Manfred Ewald, during his plea in court in 2001.

After 1952, several important events paved the way for the world recognition of East German sport. At the 50th IOC Session of NOC, held in Paris, from 13 to 18 June 1955, with 27 votes in favour and 7 against, the IOC granted provisional recognition to the NOC of East Germany, but on the condition that the two NOCs would make a serious effort to participate in the 1956 Melbourne Games with a joint delegation.<sup>19</sup>

The IOC policy not to recognise the NOC of East Germany and granting it only "provisional recognition" did not prevent the latter from participating in international, regional and world competitions of various sports where its athletes competed with great success, even to the point of being among the four most powerful sports countries in the world. Of course, at that time, how this sports "miracle" was achieved had not yet been revealed.

The NOC of East Germany saw this gradual sporting progress as an important advantage in its effort to be fully recognised by the IOC. At the same time, however, in order to maintain the status of "provisional recognition" it had secured, it had to comply and agree with the sports authorities of West Germany on the joint representation at the 1956 Games. Thus, after a series of meetings and discussions,

<sup>19</sup> Minutes of the 50th IOC Session of National Olympic Committees, 1955, Paris.

the two countries agreed that neither side would cause political embarrassment to the other. On the subject of the common flag for the German team, a banner with the German colours of black, red and gold and the five Olympic rings on a white background in the centre was chosen.

After the 1956 Games, East Germany continued to push hard for full recognition of its NOC and for equality in sport with West Germany. In order to support its application for full recognition, it used the argument of the wide recognition that its national sports federations received from the respective international federations. Although East Germany also agreed with the IOC's decision taken in Munich, on 29 May 1959, on the joint appearance of athletes at the 1960 Rome Games, it did not stop pressuring the IOC for separate and full recognition. It knew very well that its participation in the biggest sporting and cultural institution, that of the Olympic Games, as an independent sports power would facilitate a recognition by the UN.

The '60s were marked by the fierce confrontation between East and West in the political arena, a confrontation that soon spread to sports. However, despite the political adversity, the Olympic Movement, looking beyond political expedencies, did not cease looking for a formula that would allow the parallel course of the two Germanies without causing any disruption of an ideological nature.

The 1964 Tokyo Games were another good opportunity for the two Germanies to appear together. The political and sports authorities of East Germany once again realised that they had no choice but to accept the joint appearance since, if they refused, it would give West Germany the right to appear as the sole representative of the Germans not only to the spectators of the Games and to the members of the Olympic family, but also through television to people around the world.

A joint German team for the 1964 Games was established with incredible difficulty. A total of 15 NOC conferences and 96 meetings of sports players from East and West Germany and more than a thousand hours of discussions took place. Eventually, objections were lifted on both sides and the two Germanies appeared with one delegation at those Games.

Nevertheless, the climate was gradually changing. The IOC's insistence on maintaining a compromise between the two opposite sides politically, the normal fatigue caused by this confrontation, but above all the extraordinary performances of the East German athletes at the events in which they participated, gradually led to the acceptance of an unprecedented situation, namely their joint presence in the Olympic Movement, which significantly helped East Germany to win a place in the Olympic family and a little later in the UN.

At the IOC Session held in Madrid, on 8 October 1965, only five members were willing to vote again in favour of another joint German team at the 1968 Mexico Games. The forerunner of this shift was the European Track and Field Championship, where the International Track and Field Federation allowed the two delegations to parade separately for the first time since the beginning of the political conflict between them. As a result of the discussions, the separate presence of the two Germanies at the 1968 Games was voted on, provided that they paraded at the Olympic Stadium under the same flag and used the same emblem and anthem, thus putting an end to this long political-sport tug-of-war.<sup>20</sup> In fact, East Germany had invested heavily in Olympic sport wishing to promote the socialist model of sport and increase its clout against West Germany. Thus, in the 1968 Grenoble Winter Games, and in Mexico City Summer Games, the two delegations appeared with two identical flags in black, red and gold, framing the five white Olympic rings.

The final step in East Germany's long battle for full recognition of its own NOC was taken at the 67th IOC Session in Mexico City, in 1968, where with 44 votes in favour and 4 against, the NOC of East Germany received "full recognition" with the right to participate in the future Games with an independent team, its own flag, emblem and anthem. The IOC members were tired of the continuing tension and bitterness following years of political confrontation caused by the German issue. But also, the members of the West German NOC realised that they were now the only to oppose the further independence of East Germany.<sup>21</sup>

The choice of Munich as the city to host the 1972 Games caused problems in East and West Germany alike. Given that the NOC of East Germany had been fully recognised by the IOC, the Munich Games Organising Committee was forced to recognise the East German flag, emblem and anthem, on West German territory. The East Germans had achieved their final goal. In 1973, the UN recognised East Germany as an independent State and admitted it into its fold.

The manner in which the IOC handled this particular case clearly shows the positive role that it could play in international politics, albeit with internal tensions, which did not, however, alter how its clout appeared to others. According to Hill (1992): *"...the German story illustrates a number of characteristics of the Olympic Movement. First, the IOC felt able to take a strong line with East Germany for many years. The forces that persuaded it to abandon its insistence on a joint team*

<sup>20</sup> Minutes of the 64th IOC Session, 1965, Madrid

<sup>21</sup> Minutes of the 67th IOC Session, 1968, Mexico.

*for the two Germanies were in part internal to the movement and in part external. Internally, the IFs' interest lay in affiliating East German federations, and as time went on, they increasingly did so. The IOC was therefore faced with its usual problem: If it gave a lead it might act precipitately and be accused of acting in an overtly political manner; if it delayed indefinitely, the IFs might take decisions without waiting for the IOC, thereby undermining its authority within the world of sports.... Externally, the IOC was strongly influenced by the prevailing belief that it would not be long before Germany was reunited. This gradually became an unlikely outcome, partly because East Germany had made such effective use of sports as a means to establish a separate national identity in the eyes of the world. But in the long run, both the IOC and the West German government have proved right, for Germany has been reunited with startling speed and suddenness".*



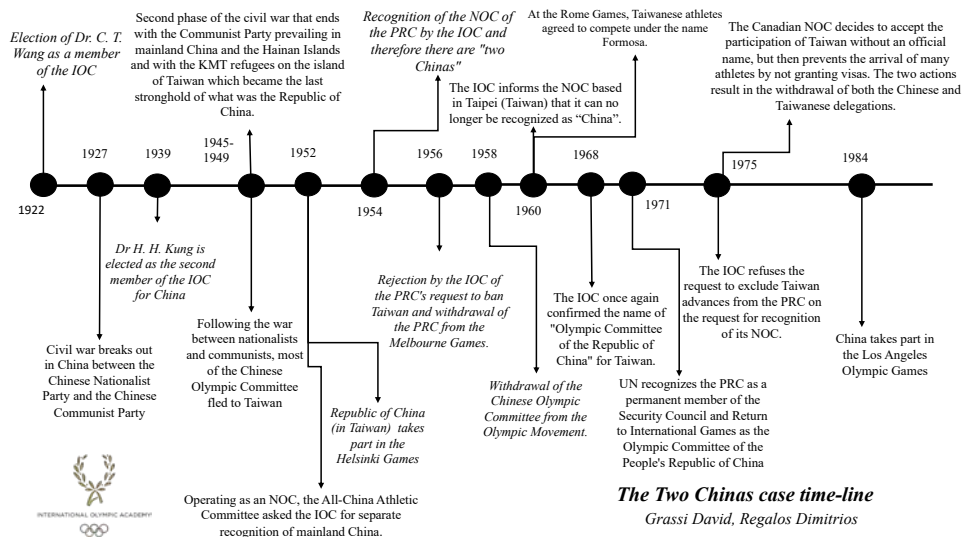
*The East Germany's delegation parades in the opening ceremony of the 1972 Olympic Games at the Munich's Olympic Stadium.*

In the years after 1972 the fierce sporting rivalry between the two Germanies did little to promote understanding. As with political relations, the intense rivalry between the Germanies at the Olympics and other sporting events mirrored, in miniature, the relationship between the two superpowers. And yet, as the GDR's

insistence on the nature of sport for all had served as a major prop in its campaign for international recognition, so it came to be seen as a fact of life in the West, accompanying Brandt's 'two States, one nation' theory (Hughes & Owen, 2009).

## b. The "two Chinas"

The case of the two Chinas was one of the most interesting cases dealt with by the Olympic Movement and related to the involvement of politics in sports, not so much concerning specific Olympic Games, but rather with respect to the dynamics generated over 30 years. As you can ascertain from the discussion of events below, a particularly intense conflict of political and sports interests arose during that period of time. The efforts by both sides to impose specific terms, in order to resolve the matter of the name of the Olympic Committees of two separate States, proved the size of its political influence in sports developments concerning a matter which was obviously of lesser importance to the sports family. It can be stated in all certainty, that the result of this conflict satisfied all the players of this theatrical play, however, it left a bitter aftertaste for the main protagonists in the Olympic family, the athletes of both countries who were deprived of the joy of participating in a series of Olympics, which they desired so greatly. The question still remains open. Did politics or sports carry the day? There can be no doubt, however, as to the loser.



In 1922, the IOC elected Dr C. T. Wang as its first member in China, indirectly recognising the Chinese Olympic Committee and afterwards, in 1939, elected Dr H. H. Kung as its second member for China.<sup>22</sup> Immediately following the war between nationalists and communists, in 1951, most of the Chinese Olympic Committee fled to Taiwan and, as far as the IOC was concerned, continued to theoretically represent China. Meanwhile, however, mainland China, with its new political regime, continued its sports activities through the All-China Athletic Committee, which supervised all sport in China without participating at an international event. In 1952, operating as a NOC, the All-China Athletic Committee asked the IOC for separate recognition of China.

That same year, this delicate matter became even more difficult as the IOC had to face the practical side of the problem, since “both Chinas” had stated their intention to participate in the 1952 Games. At the 47th Session held in Helsinki (17 July 1952), the member of the IOC for Italy, F. Pietri, submitted the proposal that, since there were two different governments in two different territories, with the same name, the IOC had the ability to decide that both territories should participate. Twenty-nine members voted in favour of this proposal, while 22 members voted in favour of the opposite view, that neither should participate.<sup>23</sup> During the meeting of the General Assembly, the representative of the PRC, Cheng Chir Pai, asked for the floor and, after fiercely attacking the Republic of China and its NOC, which he even called the “Committee of Migrants”, called for the immediate withdrawal of the ROC athletes and the recognition of the NOC of the PRC. The then President of the IOC, J.S. Edstrom, in response to Cheng Chir Pai, made it very clear to the members of the Session that “... *(the representative of the Chinese Government) does not enjoy the (IOC’s) recognition allowing him to impose conditions or give advice or guidance to the members of the Session. The IOC shall take all its decisions in full independence.*”<sup>24</sup>

Of course, in both cases, the principle of the Charter that only one IOC is recognised for each State was obviously ignored, as it would not resolve the problem, but would rather make it worse by indirectly intervening in a country’s major political issue. Taiwan supported this position and, upon learning of the IOC’s decision to accept the People’s Republic of China (despite not having a NOC), withdrew in protest.

At the same General Assembly, Edstrom completed his term as President and

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22 Minutes of the 39th IOC Session, 1939, London.

23 Minutes of the 48th IOC Session, 1952, Helsinki.

24 Minutes of the 48th IOC Session, 1952, Helsinki.



handed over the leadership of the IOC to the American Avery Brundage, who had been elected with a large majority. He was a man of controversial political ideology who, nonetheless, from the first moment of his Presidency, was in favour of separating politics from sports; a position he passionately supported throughout his administrative career.

In 1954, the IOC also formally recognised the NOC of the PRC, whilst also maintaining its recognition of Taiwan, circumventing the commitment to accept only one NOC per country, introducing the concept of recognised territories under the control of a separate NOC, a decision that was later used in the case of the “two Germanies”.

However, a quarrel broke out in 1956, when the People’s Republic of China sought the removal of the Olympic Committee of Taiwan, which still used the name China. This proposal met with a strong reaction by then IOC President Avery Brundage, who repeated the position that was dear to his heart: that sports and politics should not be mixed. He proceeded to turn down the PRC’s demand, causing it to withdraw from the Melbourne Games and afterwards from all International Federations. It was the time of Mao Zedong’s Cultural Revolution, during which the PRC had no interest in participating in sports events.

The withdrawal of the PRC from the Melbourne Games was not the only one. The boycott policy had started, causing the anger of President Brundage who, capitalizing on the withdrawal of other countries, such as, on the one hand, Egypt, Iraq and Lebanon who protested because of the Suez affair and, on the other hand The Netherlands, Cambodia, Spain and Switzerland, who protested against the presence of the USSR at the Games, despite the bloody crushing of the Hungarian Revolt by Soviet troops, made a historic statement to the IOC General Assembly: *“... The Olympic Games are games between individuals and not between nations. We hope that those who have declared that they will not to participate in them would reconsider. In an imperfect world, if participation in sport were to cease whenever politicians violated laws of humanity, there would be no international contests. Wouldn’t it be preferable to extend the fair play of the sport field to other areas too?”*<sup>25</sup>

In 1958, Shou Yi Tung, IOC member for China, toeing the political line of the PRC, resigned from his position and withdrew China’s Olympic Committee from the Olympic Movement. Monique Berlioux (1973, p. 171), in her article published in the IOC’s Olympic Review, in June 1973, recounted: *“...at the beginning of*

<sup>25</sup> Minutes of the 52nd IOC Session, 1956, Melbourne.

August 1958, there was a dramatic turn of events. A short statement to the press informed the world that the Olympic Committee of the People's Democratic Republic of China was resigning from the Olympic Movement. Mr Tung sent in his resignation to the IOC accompanied by a long diatribe against its President and his colleagues. The official announcement reached the headquarters of the IOC on 25th August. Simultaneously, the National Federations of that country resigned from the International Athletics, Basketball, Football, Wrestling, Weightlifting, Swimming, Shooting and Tennis Federations. On 30th August, the IOC accepted Mr. Tung's resignation and took note at the same time of the withdrawal of the Committee of the People's Democratic Republic from the Olympic Movement. The next Session of the IOC, the 55th, was held in Munich, in May 1959. The following motion proposed by Lord Killanin was adopted: 'The Chinese Olympic Committee with its headquarters at Taipei (Taiwan) shall be informed that it can no longer be recognized under this name, in view of the fact that it no longer administers sport in China. Its name will be removed from the official list. If an application for recognition were to be submitted to the IOC under another name, the question would then be re-examined.' And so, the door was left open to the two Chinas".

The decision reached at this meeting of the IOC Executive Board on the names of the Olympic Committees of both countries created a feeling in the sports world that politics had imposed its positions on the IOC, a fact that obliged the President of the US Olympic Committee, Avery Brundage, to issue an announcement, which clearly shows the IOC's effort to maintain its independence on the one hand and to impose rules on the Olympic Movement that would leave no doubt about the IOC's intention to apply its Principles and its moral authority, on the other. Berlioux, at the same above article, describes the content of the Munich meeting as follows: "...at our meeting, in Munich, it was pointed out that, if the Peking Committee has no authority in Taiwan, it is equally true that the Formosa Committee has no authority in China. It was for this reason that the following action was taken in Munich: The Chinese National Olympic Committee, having its seat in Taipei (Taiwan), will be notified by the International Olympic Committee's Chancellor that it cannot continue to be recognized under that name since it does not control sport in the country of China, and its name will be removed from the official list. If an application for recognition under a different name is made, it will be considered by the International Olympic Committee. It was no pressure from anyone – the action was practically unanimous and it was a purely common-sense decision, not political in any sense of the word. We cannot recognize a Chinese

*Committee in Taiwan any more than we could recognize an Italian Committee in Sicily or a Canadian Committee in Newfoundland".*<sup>26</sup>

In the following 1960 Rome Games, Taiwan's athletes agreed to compete under the name Formosa. However, that was not a result of a simple decision taken by all three implicated parties, the Taiwan O.C., the China O.C. and the IOC. At the opening ceremony, 73 members of the Taiwanese Delegation marched into the stadium with the lead athlete carrying a sign saying "UNDER PROTEST". The IOC President, Avery Brundage, had to be persuaded against banning the Taiwanese athletes and delegation, accepting the solution of the athletes competing under the name of "Formosa". This solution was a temporary one, since the Taiwanese Sports Authorities felt the name of "Formosa" did not represent them at all (Nocita, 2020).

In 1968, the name "Olympic Committee of the Republic of China" was confirmed once again by the IOC. In 1971, the UN recognised the PRC as a permanent member of the Security Council, resulting in its return to international games as the Olympic Committee of the People's Republic of China. The IOC President at the time was Lord Killanin, who fervently wanted the return of China within the IOC, without, however, excluding Taiwan, which in turn had been barred from various International Federations that had ceded to the relevant request of China, which did not want to co-exist with Taiwan. Those were the times when the new phase of negotiations on the future of the two Olympic Committees commenced. This was fated to end in the fiasco at Montreal, with both delegations withdrawing from the 1976 Games.

In April 1975, the PRC was a member with the requisite number of international federations and had applied for recognition by the IOC, stating, however, that it would participate only if Taiwan was barred, something that the IOC could not accept as such an admission would lead to the conclusion that the IOC would bow its head to political tactics.

On 23 May 1975, in response to the question about whether the government would support the participation of both Chinas in the 1976 Games, Canadian officials answered that: *"...these decisions have to be made by the International Olympic Committee. We are the host for the Games, but we do not decide who participates"* (Pei, 2006, p. 24).

What concerned the organisers was not if they would allow Taiwan's athletes to participate in the Games, which Beijing had officially requested, but if it would use

<sup>26</sup> Minutes of the 55th IOC Session, 1959, Munich.

the word “China” in the name of their Olympic Committee. The Canadians did not reveal their decision until before the end of May 1976, which was to accept Taiwan’s participation without the official name, as the IOC had accepted years ago, causing a storm of reactions by the overwhelming majority of its members. In fact, some went so far as to ask for the cancellation of the Games or their relocation to another country! In a reply to the Canadian stance, the IOC issued the following statement: “...the Canadian position is in direct conflict with fundamental Olympic Principles and Montreal would never have been awarded the Games ... if Canada had not given assurances that athletes from all National Olympic Committees recognised by the IOC would be allowed to attend” (Pei, 2006, p. 24).

By 9 July, just eight days before the opening ceremony, not only had the sides not reached an agreement, but instead the Canadian government proceeded to make a move that was unacceptable for Olympic morals: it forbid many members from the Taiwan Olympic team from boarding the flight from Detroit to Montreal as they lacked visas!

On 11 July, the IOC Executive Board decided to propose to the IOC plenary session that Taiwan would compete as “Taiwan” under the Olympic flag; the proposal was accepted with 58 votes in favour (2 against and 6 abstentions).<sup>27</sup> Both countries concerned rejected this decision and on 19 and 29 July respectively the delegations of Taiwan and the PRC returned home, depriving their athletes of the opportunity to compete at an Olympic level.

Looking at the matter in hindsight, Pei (2006, p. 26), expressed the view that it is hard to believe that the PRC, beset by so many political disasters, had the ability to organise a team to enter the 1976 Games. Indeed, there are no indications that the PRC was actually going to take part in the Montreal Games. The local news and propaganda in China were silent on the issue. Few Chinese even knew that the Olympics were being hosted in Canada.

Juan Antonio Samaranch, who succeeded Killanin in 1980, was instrumental in resolving the problem. In the IOC Plenary Session of 1978, in Athens, he suggested that, in the same way that other independent territories such as Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, which although politically linked to the US have Olympic Committees recognised by the IOC, the same could very well also apply to Taiwan, which furthermore had no connection to the political situation in China. There was also the precedent of Bohemia, which in 1912 was a point of conflict between Austria and Hungary and finally its participation was settled without too many

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27 Minutes of the 78th IOC Session, 1976, Montreal.

problems. The resolution of the issue was helped along by the PRC softening its stance, which from a political standpoint was a different China.<sup>28</sup>

At the IOC Plenary Session, in Montevideo, in 1979, some signs of compromise began to appear. The PRC appeared willing to permit the Taiwan NOC to include the term "China" in its name. The decision passed with a narrow margin (36 voters in favour, 30 against), but managed to put an end to a situation that had concerned the Olympic family and international politics for many years. For the second time in history, the Chinese Olympic Committee (PRC) located in Beijing, became a member of the IOC. Recognition of the Chinese Olympic Committee (Taiwan) located in Taipei, also became established fact. The excerpt from the minutes of the 81st Session of the IOC states the following: *"...Having heard the reports of the IOC Commission of Investigation regarding the two areas of China, the 81st Session of the IOC meeting in Montevideo received the delegations from Beijing and Taipei with the aim of enabling all Chinese youth to participate in the Olympic Games. As a result of the above, and in an Olympic spirit, the IOC decided: (1) to readmit the Chinese Olympic Committee (Beijing); and (2) to maintain recognition of the Olympic Committee whose headquarters are located in Taipei. All matters pertaining to name, anthem and flag, will be subject to studies and agreements which will have to be completed as soon as possible".*<sup>29</sup>

In order to execute the decision of the Montevideo Session, the IOC Executive Board in its meeting in Nagoya, in October 1979, recommended to the members of the General Session to have a postal vote to resolve on whether they agree with its final proposal which was: *"...The Olympic Committee of the PRC to be recognised as the 'Chinese Olympic Committee' with its own distinctive anthem and flag and the Olympic Committee of Taiwan as 'Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee' with a different anthem and different flag than those used until then".*<sup>30</sup> The proposal of the Executive Board was accepted with 62 votes in favour, 17 against, and 2 disqualified. Nevertheless, the decision was contested fervently by the *Chinese Taipei Olympic Committee*, which served a writ on the IOC, that was later withdrawn after an agreement was reached in the Executive Board's meeting in February 1981, in Los Angeles, to preserve the change decided in the Session and to refer to the name of the Taiwan Olympic Committee only in English. The agreement was officially announced in April 1981, putting an end to the struggle between politics and sport that lasted 30 whole years!

28 Minutes of the 80th IOC Session, 1978, Athens.

29 Minutes of the 81st IOC Session, 1979, Montevideo.

30 China and the five rings, Olympic Review 145 (1979).

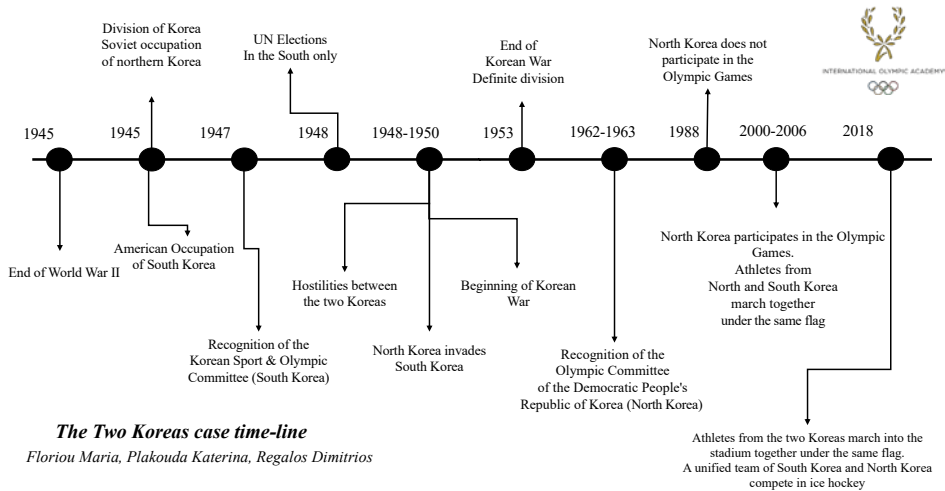
The IOC showed itself to be a Master of Diplomacy in the context of one of the most important post-war political conflicts in Asia. Without appreciably giving way on its fundamental Principles and its operational institutions, it managed to successfully impose its conditions on the political dispute between the People's Republic of China and Nationalist China. In spite of the threats and mini boycotts by both countries in order to make their positions accepted, it resisted and followed a course independent of political influences, even with respect to the UN.

In a very comprehensive paper about the background events that marked the "Two Chinas case", Brownell (2005, p. 3), observes: *"...In working through the primary sources upon which this paper is based, I have been struck by the inadequacy of the vision conjured up by the word 'globalization.' It tends to conjure up an image of the world as one happy 'global village, which obscures some harsh political realities. As I hope I have conveyed, China's emergence as a world sports power was built on the backs of individual people who worked very hard to achieve goals that had great personal meaning for them. They had suffered war and poverty under the Nationalist regime and risked their lives for the cause of the Communist revolution. They cultivated personal networks of support among Asian, African, and socialist nations in order to contest the monopoly over world sports by the Western powers. This was a very human process. If one speaks only of global forces in the abstract, one loses sight of the very personal nature of the politics involved"*.

### **c. The two Koreas**

Contrary to the two previous cases where the IOC's intervention in resolving serious political conflicts was successful, in the case of the political conflict between North and South Korea in the late '80s the same did not happen. As it is commonly accepted, the IOC, under the Samaranch Presidency, although failing to bring the two countries closer in terms of diplomacy, succeeded in imposing the Principles of the Olympic Movement in the field of sports practice and contributing indirectly to the general change in the social and political situation in South Korea.

The intervention of the IOC in the rivalry between the two countries with the aim of bringing their political leaders closer together on the occasion of the organisation of the Games in South Korea, took place in two stages, each with different results: first, on the occasion of the 1988 Summer Seoul Games, and second, at the 2018 Winter PyeongChang Games.



After World War II and the Yalta Agreement, the Korean peninsula was divided into two parts, creating the territory of South Korea (Republic of Korea) in the sphere of influence of the US and the territory of North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) in the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. From 1950 to 1953, war between these two States was inevitable as both sides considered that they represented the entire Korean peninsula, and the political regimes that developed in the meantime, as was natural, opted to form part of the capitalist and communist family respectively. Contrary to North Korea, where the dominance of Kim Il-sung was absolute and not to be contested until recently when he was succeeded by his son, the political and social life of S. Korea was marked by government changes and political instability.

The division of Korea created problems for the IOC of a similar nature as those of the "two Germanies" and the "two Chinas", such as, for example, the matter of representation of the Korean peninsula, which until the Korean War had been secured by Seoul, and the issue of participating in the Games under one flag or with different markings. The S. Korea Olympic Committee was recognised by the IOC in 1947, during the Stockholm Session.<sup>31</sup> As a matter of fact, only athletes from the recognised country participated in the 1948 London Games. Between 1953 and 1955, the interest of the IOC was focused on the two Germanies and two Chinas and it did not examine this problem in depth.

Konstantin Andrianov (IOC member in the USSR) was a fervent supporter of

<sup>31</sup> Minutes of the 41st IOC Session, 1947, Stockholm.

recognising the permanent status of N. Korea. In 1957,<sup>32</sup> he asked that N. Korea be granted "provisional recognition", with a parallel proposal for its athletes to participate in a unified "Korea" team along the lines of the two Germanies for the 1960 Rome Games. In order to avoid a one-sided decision with respect to the selection of athletes, the IOC proposed that the International Federations be assigned this task, which, undoubtedly, would serve the end purpose of a single team of athletes for both countries. According to this proposal, the team would have a joint flag, emblem and uniforms. South Korea agreed, perhaps because it was certain that its athletes' performances would outdo those of N. Korea. However, talks broke down and N. Korea did not participate in the 1960 Games.

In 1962, the IOC granted N. Korea provisional recognition as it had done for East Germany, in order to permit the two Koreas to participate in the 1964 Tokyo Games as a single team. Unfortunately, the scheduled talks did not take place, this time because S. Korea reacted, invoking political changes in the country, although it was clear that its stance was caused by the decision being "imposed" on them.

The following year, in the Baden-Baden Session, by proposal of Adrianov, N. Korea became a regular member of the IOC. This enabled N. Korea to gain admittance to the 1964 Tokyo Games, something that did not happen as the IOC decided to exclude athletes who competed in the 1963 Asian Games known as the Games of the Emerging Forces (GANEF), to which N. Korea had sent its best athletes.<sup>33</sup>

In the 1972 Munich Games and the 1976 Montreal Games both delegations were accepted separately, whilst S. Korea did not participate in the 1980 Moscow Games and N. Korea in the 1984 Los Angeles Games.

The Baden-Baden Session, in 1981, was a triumph for S. Korea and an unpleasant surprise for its Northern neighbours, as well as for all Olympic Committees originating from socialist countries. With 52 votes (compared to 27 for Nagoya), Seoul was chosen to host the 1988 Games. It should be noted that almost none of the socialist countries had diplomatic relations with S. Korea, a fact that put the good organisation of the Games at risk.

Richard Pound (1994, pp. 3-5), in his book *"The five rings over Korea"*, gives a detailed analysis of every aspect of what happened openly or behind the scenes resulting in the selection of Seoul and how the South Koreans responded to the

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32 Minutes of the 54th IOC Session, 1957, Sofia.

33 See Chapter 9, "Efforts to undermine the Institution of the Olympic Games: The 'Workers' Olympics", the Spartakiad of the Peoples of the USSR and the "GANEF" Games.



challenge of those Games. According to images presented by the two cities vying for the Games, at first glance it appeared that Nagoya was superior to Seoul. Having recently successfully organised the Games twice, in Tokyo (1964) and Sapporo (1972), the Japanese appeared certain that they would be chosen, taking into account three facts that they considered would adversely affect the candidacy of Seoul: a) the on-going hostilities with N. Korea at the borders between the two States, only 30 miles away from Seoul; b) the unstable domestic situation in N. Korea, with repeated military coups in the last months before the Baden-Baden Summit; and c) S. Korea's participation in the boycott of the 1980 Moscow Games although this fact was not enough to turn the votes of IOC members against them as Japan had also participated in the boycott. Additionally, it was certain that Seoul would lose all the votes of the IOC's socialist members, as their countries did not have diplomatic relations with Seoul's regime but had close ties with N. Korea. Nevertheless, the great majority of the IOC members finally placed their trust in Seoul, which organised an exceptional Games and managed to bring about sweeping political-economic change in the country.

Mi-Suk and Streppelhoff (2011, p. 41), describe another aspect of the conflict between the two neighbouring countries: *"The initial plan of the North was to convince the communist bloc to boycott the Games, but when the socialist sport leaders met in Pyongyang, in 1983, it became clear that such a target would not be possible. None of the delegates wanted to agree to such an act. They were only ready "to step in" if what they saw as the "reactionary circles of world imperialism" were to abuse the 1988 Olympics for their political aims"*.

Having secured the participation of the Soviet bloc in the Games, Seoul became a lot more accommodating in the negotiations that continued from 1981 to 1988, despite the efforts made by the Soviet side to find another city to host the Games. Upon realising that this was not possible, they focused their efforts on sharing the Games between Seoul and Pyongyang. The IOC was afraid that if a solution acceptable to both sides were not found, the risk of a boycott existed, for the third consecutive time following Moscow and Los Angeles and would harbour great risks for the Olympic Movement and greatly contest its Principles. The fear of extreme politicisation of the Movement, as well as the diplomatic abilities of President Samaranich, who had supported Seoul's bid, being contested, were nightmares for the IOC.

Assigning some events to Pyongyang had started to gain ground, but finally the demands of N. Korea to organise more than two events (ping-pong and archery),

as had been decided, did not produce any results. During talks held in Lausanne, President Samaranch drew the attention of the delegates to the fact that the IOC was sensitive to the point of view expressed by the NOC of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and was, in allocating organisation of sports competitions to the DPR of Korea, going against the Principles laid down in the "Olympic Charter". The aforementioned proposal was historic in that, for the first time, and contrary to the rules of the Charter, the Games of the Olympiad would be celebrated in two different countries. The IOC was disappointed that the NOC of the DPR of Korea did not seem to attach sufficient importance to the possibility of organising Olympic competition in their territory. The President requested delegates to *"...study the proposal made by the IOC attentively and to provide an answer as soon as possible"*.<sup>34</sup>

Although things were proceeding based on the above agreement, the IOC discovered something that was a game changer and resulted in IOC withdrawing the solution of the two events, which had never been to the North Koreans' liking anyway. It was informed that the Olympic family would face problems with accreditations, which would not suffice from a political point to enter and exit N. Korea, would hinder the free movement of those accredited and violate one of the main conditions of the Host City Contract for awarding the Games. Un Yong Kim, President of the Olympic Committee of S. Korea (1990, p. 144), wrote characteristically: *"...a strong clue about the conflict North Korea must have felt came in May 1987, when it denied passage from North to South Korea through Panmunjom for an inspection team led by Alexander Siperku. The denial prompted IOC President Samaranch to send a protest letter, pointedly asking 'How can mass traffic through Panmunjom be possible if North Korea cannot even approve the symbolic passage by the IOC delegation'?"*

A high proportion of the "mass traffic" referred to by Samaranch would have been television and media personnel. This was directly acknowledged by Kim Un-Yong who wrote that: *"...Pyongyang was not ready to accept 25,000 accredited athletes, officials and press and TV, especially those from the West"* (Larson & Park, 1993, p. 181). This was the only time that the IOC President was aided in his efforts to find a solution by the heads of State such as Andreotti of Italy, Castro of Cuba and Gorbachev of Russia – who helped in their own way!

As was to be expected, a decision that deprived N. Korea from hosting part of

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34 Extract from the minutes of the meeting between representatives of the Olympic Committees of North Korea, South Korea and the IOC (14 July 1987).

the Games could in all likelihood unleash a new movement to boycott the Games by countries that supported its policies. However, having secured the support of the Soviet bloc, the IOC did not appear willing to give in to any such blackmail. Finally, only six countries (Cuba, Ethiopia, Nicaragua, Albania, Seychelles and Madagascar) followed N. Korea's suit in not sending delegations to the Games, although they did not dare call this a "boycott" fearing possible punishment by the IOC.

The Games were a great success and paved the way for new commercial and cultural ties between S. Korea and the Western world. Yong Kim naturally sees the Games as having been a success, both as a sporting occasion, and as the beginning of a new phase in Korea's existence as a nation, at last free from the inferiority of having been a colony of Japan. Korea emerged from its Japan complex in Baden-Baden and the Olympic Games were a turning point for the country to move into the ranks of the world's advanced nations (Hill, 1992).

Nevertheless, President Samaranch's effort to bring the two countries of the Korean peninsula closer with the vision of global peace did not have the expected result. However, this failure did not deter him; on the contrary, he became even more determined and attempted once more to find the middle ground, hoping to succeed where many political forces had failed in the past. Even though he engineered the joint parade of the two delegations in the 2000 Sydney and 2004 Athens Games, hoping to raise awareness amongst the political leaders of the two countries, so as to open talks in hope of peace between them but also on a world level – this never came to pass.

The fact that in the following years, the two Koreas, instead of coming closer together, grew further apart, could be considered a failed attempt of sports intervening in politics. However, what can be easily concluded from this case is that the IOC managed, through its faith and persistence in its Principles, to make important political figures have second thoughts on the matter and to bring around the same table two nations who share the same blood but have different perspectives on politics and the economy, which they did not espouse by themselves but rather were imposed on them.

While the efforts made to build trust between N. and S. Korea in 1988 did not bear fruit, this was not the case on the occasion that presented itself 30 years later during the PyeongChang Winter Olympics. At many points throughout this treatise, reference has been made to the important diplomatic contribution of the IOC and the personal success of its President, Bach, in relaunching peace talks between the two countries of the Korean peninsula. It is impressive that what other international

players did not manage to achieve, was achieved by a non-governmental Institution, such as the IOC, upon the occasion of organising the PyeongChang Winter Olympics. The efforts undertaken by the IOC in signing the Olympic Korean Peninsula Declaration, which recalls “...the Olympic spirit of understanding and mutual respect” and how the efforts of an international sports Organisation, through the PyeongChang Olympic Games “open the door to a brighter future on the Korean Peninsula [...]. To that end, beyond the screams of success or the tears of failure in PyeongChang, the image of Kim Yo-jong’s<sup>35</sup> smile while she shook hands with the President of South Korea, Moon Jae-in, an unprecedented diplomatic move – illustrates that sport and diplomacy are wholly intertwined” (Rofe, 2018, p. 3).



*The united delegation of South and North Korea entering the Olympic Stadium of PyeongChang, participating at the 2018 Winter Games.*

With the Organising Committee’s acceptance of N. Korea’s participation in the Games, in spite of the late acceptance of the invitation, Bach proved that sport may, under special conditions, bring the parties in a conflict close together and pave the way to peace. The meeting of the two leaders of S. and N. Korea at the borders of their countries paved the way for further talks.

<sup>35</sup> Deputy Director of the Publicity and Information Department of the Workers’ Party of Korea.

The President of the IOC, on the occasion of the celebration of the first anniversary of the PyeongChang Winter Games, highlighted the important role that the event played in the effort to launch the Korean peace process. On 9 February 2019, in a historic speech on the future of the two countries, Bach noted that this anniversary marks a year since the opening ceremony of the 2018 PyeongChang Games, a fact that history will probably remember as the catalyst in the rapprochement of the two countries. The fact that N. and S. Korean athletes paraded together during the opening ceremony and a joint Korean team competed in the women's ice hockey tournament is a success that demonstrates that, through sport, much can be achieved if the appropriate attitude and will are shown.

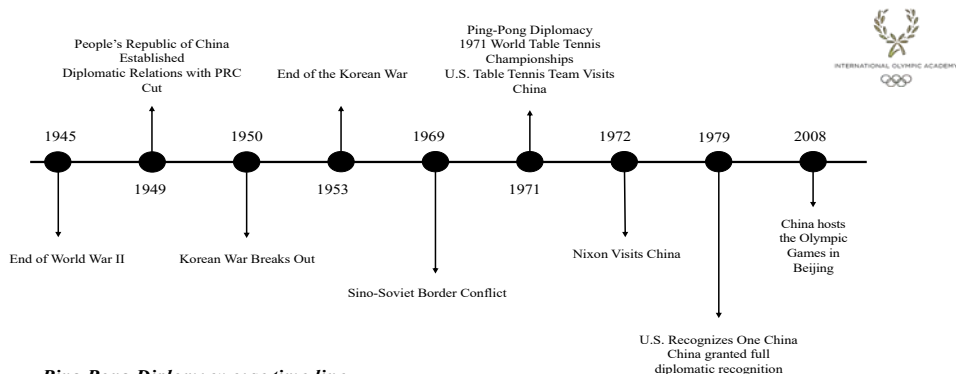
Lastly, he pointed out that: *"... from the sporting achievements and the experience of the athletes to the excellent organisation, these Games opened new horizons in more ways than one could have imagined... with these powerful symbols in PyeongChang, we saw how the Olympic Games can pave the way for dialogue and how the Olympic Values can pave the way for a more peaceful future".*<sup>36</sup>

#### **d. "Ping-pong diplomacy"**

Amongst the most important instances of mixing politics and sports was the so-called "ping-pong diplomacy" between China and the US. It was perhaps the most characteristic case of sports being used as a vehicle for building relations between States with a major international impact.

From 1949, when Mao Zedong took over the leadership of China and for the duration of the Cultural Revolution, this great country's diplomatic relations with the West were non-existent, except for two instances: Switzerland and Sweden that recognised the new regime in 1950. Conversely, most countries of the so-called Communist bloc established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. The issue of Taiwan and its recognition by the majority of countries at the same time as the UN, constituted a major obstacle in the relations between China and the rest of the world. The conflict between the PRC and the Soviet Union in 1960, for ideological reasons concerning the concept of communism, further limited China's international position, while the country attempted in any manner possible to gain a leading position on the international political stage. In 1971, when China took over Taiwan's permanent seat in the Security Council, upping its prestige, it started to turn towards the West, to countries which gradually started to offer recognition and establish diplomatic relations.

<sup>36</sup> [www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1075256/bach-hails-pyeongchang-2018](http://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1075256/bach-hails-pyeongchang-2018)



### ***Ping Pong Diplomacy case time-line***

*Griesbach Joel, Regalos Dimitrios*

This was a time when the two powers were searching to find an acceptable manner, in which to break the ice and find a formula for communication without losing face. This formula was found through a sports activity.

In April 1971, the American table tennis team took part in the world championships that were being held in Nagoya, Japan. There, they received an invitation from the Sports Authorities of China to visit Beijing for a friendly exhibition match between the two national teams. The occasion for this invitation was a random event. According to the *History of US Table Tennis* (Bogan, 2014), one of the athletes on the American team, Glenn Cowan, accidentally got on the bus transporting the PRC team and opened up conversation with Zhuang Zedong, a Chinese champion and a journalist, who asked him whether he would be interested in visiting China, a question that the athlete responded to immediately with a yes. This event was transmitted to the higher levels of the Chinese hierarchy and, despite initial reservations, the time was finally deemed right for a trial encounter.

Was it by chance? Most Americans think that it was. Henry Kissinger doubted it. In his memoir *White House Years* (1979, p. 303) he wrote that: "...the Chinese had firm instructions to befriend the Americans. One of the most remarkable gifts of the Chinese is to make the meticulously planned appear spontaneous".

During a 2007 visit to US, Zhuang Zedong insisted that it hadn't been planned. He said that the usual instructions for athletes were to be friendly towards everyone, except Americans. He noted that on his way up the bus aisle, teammates asked him what he was doing. Zhuang said that after pictures of him and Cowan appeared in Japanese papers, that the team head told him to focus on playing, not politics. Regardless of whether or not the initial approach was calculated, there's no question that the Chinese sports authorities were subsequently directed to invite the American

team to visit China.<sup>37</sup> Premier Chou En-lai worked the public relations opportunity beautifully, receiving the Americans at a banquet in the Great Hall of the People, on 14 April 1971. *"You have opened a new chapter in the relations of the American and Chinese people,"* he told the unlikely diplomats. *"I am confident that this beginning again of our friendship will certainly meet with majority support of our two peoples."* He also extended an invitation for more American journalists to visit China, *provided they do not all come at one time.*" That same day, the US announced plans to remove a 20-year embargo on trade with China. A Chinese table tennis team reciprocated by visiting the United States.<sup>38</sup>

Ping-pong was *"an apt metaphor for the relations between Washington and Peking"* noted by David A. De Voss (2002), a *Time* reporter, as each nation signaled, in turn, its openness to change. Despite the public warming trend, Nixon and Kissinger decided to keep their back-channel negotiations with China to themselves. It was not until 15 July, 1971, after Kissinger's secret mission to Beijing, that Nixon announced that he, too, would make the journey the following year, as the first American President to visit China *"Why had they been invited? The Chinese felt that, by opening a door to the United States, they could put their mostly hostile neighbours on notice about a possible shift in alliances. The United States welcomed the opportunity. Soon after the U.S. team's trip, Nixon, not wanting to lose momentum, secretly sent Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to Peking to arrange a Presidential visit to China. Nixon's journey seven months later, in February 1972, would become one of the most important events in U.S. post-war history".*

Despite the warm atmosphere between the two peoples, Nixon and Kissinger decided to not to reveal their negotiations with China to the public.<sup>39</sup> ... *"Never before in history has a sport been used so effectively as a tool of international diplomacy,"* said Chinese Premier Chou En-lai. *For Nixon, it was "the week that changed the world".*<sup>40</sup>

However, China's attempts to reach out to countries through "ping-pong diplomacy" were not always successful, such as when the All Indonesia Table Tennis Association (PTMSI) refused China's invitation in October 1971, claiming that accepting the offer would improve the PRC's reputation. Because neither athletes nor journalists from the Soviet Union appeared in China following the appearance of the American players and journalists, one speculation is that the act showed the equal scorn of both countries towards the USSR.

37 <http://china.usc.edu/talking-points-july-22-august-3-2011>.

38 <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/china/peopleevents/pande07.html>

39 <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/china/peopleevents/pande07.html>

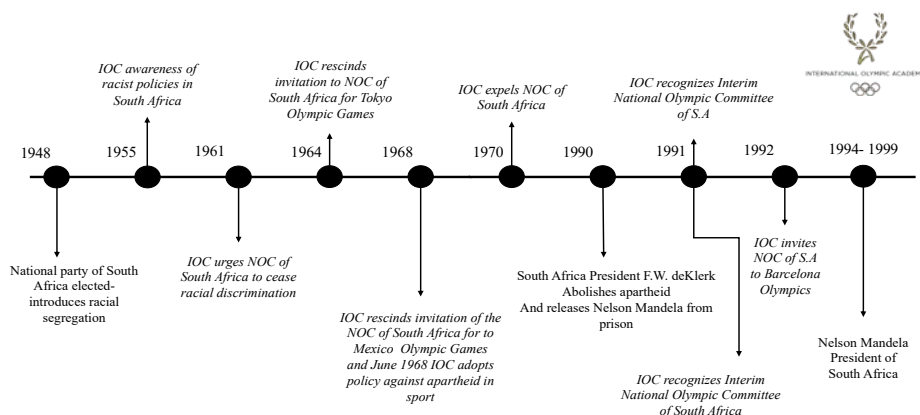
40 <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/ping-pong-diplomacy-60307544>

"The now famous "Ping Pong Diplomacy" episode and subsequent move toward normalization of relations between the two countries signalled a new way of thinking by Chinese leaders. One can also say that this was a turning point in the PRC's history, after being isolated from the world community for nearly 20 years. "Ping-pong Diplomacy" set the stage for further negotiations between the PRC and the US and initiated a carefully calculated, step-by-step rapprochement, a rapprochement which had ramifications for sporting matters. In 1971, the UN recognized the PRC and expelled Taiwan. This facilitated the admittance of the PRC to the sporting world. Since normalization of relations with America, China began to emerge from its isolation. The following years also witnessed China's rise in terms of diplomatic relationships with most of the countries in the world. China's cultural exchanges with western countries were also strengthened (Pei, 2006, p. 21).

### e. The South Africa Case

How important could the presence of the Olympic Movement be in the process of protecting human rights? This is a question that found its answer in barring the South African Olympic Committee (SAOC) from a series of Olympic events. It was the first time where a NOC implementing the Principles of the Charter was the object of many debates and the ban was finally imposed in an absolutist manner.

The case of South Africa and the apartheid policy applied by the racist regime, was a natural consequence of the interest shown by the IOC and the Olympic Movement's in this policy. The reaction against the Nazis' politics towards the Jews, prior to the 1936 Berlin Games was similar to the reaction demonstrated in the '60s, against the racist policy in South Africa.



#### *Apartheid and the South Africa case time-line*

*Pappas Andy Anastasios, Regalos Dimitrios*



This was the decade when Avery Brundage was head of the IOC, with an obsession in favour of the amateur form of sports and the maintaining of a distinction between politics and sports. Brundage tried, by every means possible, to keep the IOC distant from the apartheid issue, claiming that it should not interfere with the political philosophy of each country, since what interests the Olympic Movement is the protection of the athletes' rights from policies that could harm them.

We have to admit, though, that this position had already been supported many years ago, when he managed to prevent a boycott of the 1936 Berlin Games on the part of the American sports officials, strongly advancing the position that sports should not interfere with each country's politics and the US should take part in those Games.

Still, the conditions during the pre-war era in Europe and the US had nothing to do with the those during the post-war. The presence of the Soviet Union and the new African countries in the Movement created a new context, which was more progressive but also utterly politicized. Adrianov's voice, the IOC member in the Soviet Union, could be heard more strongly in the IOC, always presenting issues with political content since he had the support of the representatives of countries in the New World.

Contrary to the IOC's previous decision not to exclude of States from the Games because of their political behaviour during the 1964 Tokyo Games, the supreme sports authority decided to exclude South Africa and Rhodesia (which was later renamed Zimbabwe) for their apartheid policy in domestic "sports policy".

One could, of course, assert that apartheid is a form of political ideology that was expressed during a given period as a specific political act, but was different from other practices since its objective was to downgrade individuals' dignity and violate their fundamental rights, one of which is the right of free practice of sport, a right that is protected by the fundamental Principles 2, 3 and 4 of the IOC Charter.<sup>41</sup>

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41 Olympic Charter – Fundamental Principles:

2. The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.
3. The Olympic Movement is the concerted, organized, universal and permanent action, carried out under the supreme authority of the IOC, of all individuals and entities who are inspired by the values of Olympism. It covers the five continents. It reaches its peak with the bringing together of the world's athletes at the great sports festival, the Olympic Games. Its symbol is five interlaced rings.
4. The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practicing sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play.

Despite the widespread view that the IOC, in the case of South Africa and Rhodesia, had decided to intervene in the general racist policies of these countries, departing from its own policy of non-interference in the implementation of political ideologies. In fact, in these cases, a strategy of "indirect" intervention was adopted, based on the strict application of the Charter on the protection of freedom to practice sport, thus punishing a racist government, while imposing one of its fundamental Principles, that of non-discrimination, towards athletes on the basis of gender, colour and religion.

Because coloured South African citizens were not allowed to practise sport alongside whites, the IOC decided to exclude the country from seven Olympic Games, beginning with 1964 Tokyo Games, until their readmission at the 1992 Barcelona Games. For the same reason, Rhodesia was excluded from the 1968, 1972 and 1976 Games before it returned as Zimbabwe, after the change of regime, at the 1980 Moscow Games.

As far back as 1955, the IOC, faithful to the responsibility of ensuring the implementation of the regulation in its own Charter, was the first sports organisation which displayed awareness of the racist policies applied by South Africa and Rhodesia. In 1961, the IOC prompted the country's Olympic Committee to urge its government, known for its racist policy in various fields of social endeavour, to respect the rules of the Olympic Movement and to cease racial discrimination between its coloured and white athletes.

The IOC issued its final warning to the SAOC at its 60th Session at Baden-Baden, giving it until the end of December that year to obtain from that country's government a complete implementation of the regulations of the Olympic Charter regarding discrimination between its coloured and its white athletes: "*...that the South African Olympic Committee be told that, it must make a firm declaration of its acceptance of the spirit of the Olympic Code and in particular of Principle 1 and Rule 24 read together, and must get from its government by December 31st 1963, a change in policy regarding racial discrimination in sports and competitions in its country, failing which the South African National Olympic Committee will be debarred from entering its teams in the Olympic Games*".<sup>42</sup>

It was preceded by a statement by the representatives of the SAOC according to which: "*...the issue of apartheid was a matter of domestic law and did not concern the IOC and its provisions*".<sup>43</sup>

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42 Minutes of the 61th IOC Session, 1964, Innsbruck.

43 Minutes of the 60th IOC Session, 1963, Moscow.

At the 61st Session of the IOC, at Innsbruck, in January 1964, the following resolution was unanimously agreed to, in order to pressure the South African regime to comply with the Principles of the Olympic Charter:

*"The International Olympic Committee noted with approval that the South African National Committee guarantees that trials to the satisfaction of the IOC would be held to choose their Olympic team in South Africa, or outside, if the South African government makes this impossible.*

*The South African government has also made it clear that travel visas will be issued to non-white athletes attending the trials or the Olympic Games as an integral part of the South African team. The South African Olympic team would therefore be truly representative. This is very real progress.*

*The South African NOC, has, however, another duty under Rule 24 'to conduct its activities in accordance with the Olympic Regulations and high ideals of the Olympic Movement'.*

It was pointed out to the representatives of the South African NOC, by a number of speakers at the IOC Meeting at Baden-Baden, that to fulfil this obligation it was essential that it should collectively, clearly and publicly disassociate itself from the policy of non-competition in sport and non-integration in the administration of sport in South Africa between whites and non-whites, and would continue to urge this point of view.

The IOC considers that the South African NOC has not carried out this obligation adequately.

Under these circumstances, the resolution passed at Baden-Baden still stands and the invitation to the South African team to compete in Tokyo is withdrawn.

When the South African NOC has carried out its duty under Rule 24, it will then be in a position to return to the IOC for reconsideration of the decision".<sup>44</sup>

Unfortunately, the above exhortations and instructions by the IOC fell on deaf ears, with the result that, in February 1964, the Executive Board decided to rescind the invitation to South Africa to take part in the Tokyo Games and to bar the country from subsequent Games.

Not inviting South Africa to the Tokyo Games was the first step leading to the final decision to ban it from a series of Olympics in the following years. In 1965,

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44 Minutes of the 61th IOC Session, 1964, Innsbruck.

representatives of 80 NOCs met in Rome to discuss issues of common interest, related to their role in the Olympic Movement, with the aim of communicating their conclusions to the IOC as a body and not as individual associations. Prior to the opening of this conference, the representatives of the African Olympic Committees argued that their South African counterparts should not participate and that Reginald Honey, member of the IOC for South Africa, should be dismissed. The conference decided that the proposal to exclude South Africa from all Olympic institutions be submitted to the IOC Session in Madrid, the same year.

At the IOC Executive Board, which was held prior to the Madrid Session, Brundage pointed out to Honey that: *"... as he hoped, the latter would be able to persuade the government of South Africa to abandon the policy of racial discrimination in sport or at least to take a few steps in this direction, otherwise the IOC would be obliged to exclude the Olympic Committee of South Africa from the Movement"*.<sup>45</sup>

At the 64th Session of the IOC in Rome, Brundage was faced with an existential dilemma. A fervent opponent of sport's involvement in politics, he had to deal with the problem of South Africa realistically. Addressing the Plenary Session, he said: *"...It is a fact that the policy of racial discrimination is a law of the State of South Africa and if the Olympic Committee of the country disregards it, it will be subject to severe consequences. We asked them to make a public statement in favour of the Principles of the Olympic Movement regarding non-racial discrimination, but they did not do so, resulting in their athletes being barred from the Tokyo Games. Now with the Mexico Games approaching, we should re-consider the issue realistically. If we bar the Olympic Committee from the Movement, it is certain that we will not see them close to us again. If we suspend them immediately, there is the fear that we will deprive them from the possibility of agreeing to a solution with the government. I propose that a decision not be reached today, but rather that we wait until the moment that the invitations are sent to participate in the Games"*.<sup>46</sup> The same meeting accepted the presence of representatives of the SAOC, who declared that they recognise the importance of the Olympic Principle of non-racial discrimination in athletes participating in the Olympic Games and promised that there will be no restrictions on athletes, whites or coloured, who wish to participate in trials for the Mexico Olympics. It was promised that the selection would be made by a committee composed of an equal number of white and non-white athletes.

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45 Minutes of the IOC Executive Board, 1965, Madrid.

46 Minutes of the 64th IOC Session, 1966, Rome

At the same time, the IOC decided to set up a committee to examine on-site the situation in South Africa.

One year later and before the IOC Session, in Tehran, the SAOC President, Frank Braun, under pressure of the forthcoming Session of the IOC Committee on the subject and from general international disapproval, made the following "concessions": (1) South Africa would send a mixed-race team of whites and non-whites to the Games, (2) all members of the delegation would parade under the same flag and wear a common uniform, (3) South African athletes would compete with other athletes regardless of racial origin and (4) an Olympic Committee consisting only of non-white representatives would be set up to send its athletes to the Olympic trials (Espy 1979).

Braun's positions were considered satisfactory by the IOC, which now hoped to overcome this major problem. However, these proposals did not satisfy the other African countries that threatened to boycott the Games, using the Olympic platform for purely political purposes. They announced their intention to the IOC Executive Board before the Tehran Session, stating that they did not care if the non-white citizens of South Africa agreed with Braun's proposals! What needed to be done was to create a completely independent Olympic Committee without the intervention of the government. This totally hypocritical requirement of the representatives of the African Olympic Committees, since it was known that in almost all the new countries of the continent the governments were the ones that appointed the members of the NOCs, was also supported by Andrianov, on the following grounds: *"governments should not interfere in the affairs of national Olympic Committees or federations, unless governments are the ones that have the potential to promote sport in the country"!!!*

The Grenoble Session (1968), taking into account the above initiatives of the SAOC, decided by a majority and through mail vote, to allow its athletes to participate in the 1968 Mexico Games, to the great disappointment of the African States. By the end of February of that year, almost all African countries had declared that they would abstain from the Games.

Brundage, faced with an impending disaster and the imminent failure of the strategy followed by the IOC, tried to persuade the South Africans to withdraw voluntarily from the Games. Braun's response to the IOC President's proposal was unequivocal: *"Better to be shot in Mexico than lynched in Johannesburg"* (Lapchick, 1975, p. 119).

In April 1968, at Lausanne, the IOC Executive Board found itself dealing with

the problem of South Africa once again. On the one hand, there was the threat of a great boycott and on the other hand, ensuring the integrity of the Mexico Games' organisation and the reputation of the IOC. It was also confronted with President Brundage's philosophy about not mixing sport with politics, which resulted in this great impasse.

The Lausanne meeting could be considered historic. Brundage presented this challenge with realism and determination. In defence of the SAOC, he noted that it should not be confused with the government's policy. He also stated that it was not possible to pressurise a NOC to turn against the policy of a government. Meaningfully he continued: *"If the South African Olympic Committee is punished by being barred from the Olympic Games due to the policy of racial discrimination of its country, it is certain that demands for a similar policy against USA, USSR, India, Arab countries will arise for a similar discrimination policy of one or other form. It is obvious that something like that cannot be used against NOCs"*.

After a long discussion between the Board members, Brundage summarised the situation as follows:

1. The Executive Board must protect its integrity and prevent any rupture in the world of amateur sport.
2. It must salvage the Mexico Games.
3. It must show that it does not bow to boycotts and political interference.
4. The general view seemed to be that it was not "prudent" for a team from South Africa to appear in the Mexico Games.

Following this presentation, it was decided to send the following telegram to the members of the IOC, for them to agree by mail vote and in order to notify the Organising Committee of the Mexico Games: *"In view of all the information received at today's meeting and the prevailing international climate, the Executive Board expresses unanimously the view that it would be most unwise for a South African delegation to participate in the Games of the XIX Olympiad. Therefore, the Executive Board strongly recommends that you agree with its decision to rescind that NOC's invitation to the Games."*<sup>47</sup>

After South Africa was suspended for practising apartheid policies in their sporting and societal practices, the IOC debated the nation's membership and status for close to 30 years before finally readmitting the country for the 1992 Barcelona Games. The IOC President, Samaranch, and South African President, Mandela, both played major roles in ensuring the return of South Africa to the

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47 Minutes of the IOC Executive Board, 1968, Lausanne.

folds of the Olympic Movement as each from his own position worked to remove the shadows of the past from a country that was finally returning to the path of international recognition on all levels of societal action.

Throughout this entire period, there was a great deal of confusion within the Olympic Movement regarding how much such an intervention constituted a crude intervention into the general social policy of the South African regime. In the author's opinion, the IOC, in reaching these decisions, intended to indicate the importance it placed on defending human rights at all levels and not only the rights of those individuals affected by a regime's sports policy. The fact that it utilised the rules of the Charter concerning the treatment of athletes, constituted what is undoubtedly an interesting and particularly successful strategy, in order to circumvent the obstacle of involvement in a country's political affairs, a standpoint that would otherwise have found a lot of opposition from its members.

The question remains: Could the IOC have intervened in the politics of a racist regime if they did not implement that policy as regards its athletes? And, again in my opinion, they wouldn't have been able to do so.

There was the characteristic resistance of a portion of its members, headed by its own President, Brundage, who was well known for his absolute views as regards the separation of politics and sports. He insisted on this view and never lost an opportunity to express his positions in every discussion, stating that it is not the job of the Olympic Movement to change the political situation in any country. He also believed that if participation in a sporting event were to be threatened, whenever humanitarian principles are violated, there would be no international competition.

Brundage's view of apartheid as being a political issue totally removed from sport was not shared by all his colleagues. Andrianov, the IOC member for the USSR, disagreed openly. In a letter to Brundage he pointed out that: *"...trying sometimes not to take any notice of the surrounding present-day life, the IOC unfortunately doesn't pay attention to the existing reality. We can't keep ourselves away from and shut our eyes to flagrant discrimination on racial grounds"*. He went on saying that: *"...under the pretext that apartheid is a governmental policy inside (sic) South Africa"*. Brundage's reply is interesting for the contradiction that he failed to recognise. He agreed with Andrianov that racial discrimination was denounced by practically everyone, but apartheid was a governmental policy, and the IOC was not concerned with governments or politics. *"...There is no government yet that is perfect,"* Brundage emphasised, *"...Our concern is whether the South African OC (Olympic Committee) can function according to Olympic rules"* (Espy, 1979, p. 96).

Despite Brundage's harsh stand, the majority of the IOC members decided in favour of exclusion, a decision that saved the image of the Committee and of all the Olympic Family.

There were two events that opened the road for resolving the South African problem:

- 1) Statements were made by South African President F. W. de Klerk on 2 February 1990, in favour of a multi-racial democratic regime and establishing a dialogue with African leaders and
- 2) The release of Nelson Mandela from prison. These events gave the then President of the IOC the opportunity to intervene instrumentally and to bring about a resolution of the Executive Board of the IOC to send a delegation on site in order to ascertain how things stood. Headed by Judge Mbae, IOC member for the Ivory Coast, the delegation was made up of a majority of blacks, who supported a change of the situation for South Africa.

In March 1991, the IOC delegation visited South Africa. Conditional recognition was granted to an "Interim National Committee of South Africa". The conditions this NOC had to satisfy were: 1) the abolition of apartheid in sport, 2) respect of the Olympic Charter, 3) establishment of relations between South African national federations and the International Federations, 4) continued unification of sports on a non-racial basis, and 5) normalisation of relations with sports organisations in Africa. In July 1991, the "Apartheid and Olympism" Commission recommended that the IOC recognise the National Olympic Committee of South Africa. This recommendation was adopted. Thus, the prestige of the IOC and the power of sport as a social phenomenon had enough influence to play a significant role in the abolition of the apartheid laws in connection with sports activity in South Africa.

Hill (1992, pp. 31-32) notes: *"...The battle against apartheid was strengthened by the well-judged campaign of SANROC<sup>48</sup> to force international sports federations to expel South Africa and it would have been pointless to have asked SANROC not to use the sporting weapon, which lay to hand. Some teams made the decision, no less political, to go ahead with tours of South Africa despite their governments' advice. The fact that governments had to give such advice (most famously in the shape of the statement made in 1977 by Commonwealth Heads of Government, known as the Gleneagles Declaration), when many of them would no doubt have much preferred to keep sport out of politics, demonstrates how powerful were the forces tapped by SANROC".*

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48 South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee.



In his autobiography, President Samaranch (2003, p. 162) eloquently describes the reinstatement of South Africa to Olympic events and his meeting with Nelson Mandela, in May 1992, in Lausanne: *"...I am moved when I recall my long private conversation with President Mandela at my offices in Lausanne. During this meeting, he thanked me for the solution I had found, a solution that facilitated the return of South Africa to the Olympic Movement and its participation in the Barcelona Games.*

*However, he surprised me by informing me of an additional problem this had created: all the athletes, who took part in Barcelona were racially white (obviously due to better results).*

*We discussed this issue at length and finally I proposed that they make up a multiracial team, including black athletes as well, in order to crystallise the image of the end of apartheid. The official team would be made up of an equal number of white and black athletes, who would march into the stadium together and live side-by-side in the Olympic Village. All expenses would be covered by the IOC. Mandela was moved and we ended up embracing as brothers".*



May 1992: The historic meeting between the IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch and the South Africa's leader Nelson Mandela, at the IOC Headquarters.

*As Richard Pound observes (2004, p. 126): "... The Olympic Movement can take justifiable pride in its record of fighting racial discrimination. The way was not smooth and there were occasional setbacks, but, on the whole, it has set an example that is more worthy of admiration than condemnation. It has had the interests of athletes at heart and has not wavered from that objective. There is a tendency in the world to expect too much from a small organisation such as the IOC. It has, in the military sense that is often applied to international politics, no divisions. In that sense, it has little political power, although it has influence that cannot be entirely discounted".*

As a conclusion, concerning IOC's overall positive indirect intervention of a "political" nature affecting the Games and the Movement, Erwin Lanc, President of International Handball Federation representing the IFs, at the Centennial Olympic Congress, in 1994, stated: *"The influence of politics had weakened, as a result of growing economic strength and professionalism in Olympic sport, especially over the last decade. From all this, he drew the following – possibly daring – conclusions:... firstly, the Olympic Games had promoted rather than hindered the growth of democracy in Mexico and South Korea; secondly, since 1984, sports had contributed to recognition by the leaders of former communist countries in Eastern Europe that their system was not viable; thirdly, the IOC and the International Federations should insist diplomatically upon the autonomy of sport in dictatorships; fourthly, in the context of aid from the richer to the poorer in the area of sport, it was important not to repeat mistakes made in development aid policy; and lastly, the policies of international sports organizations should aim to find a negotiated balance between sport and its commercial partners and should not exert economic pressure".*<sup>49</sup>

### **IOC's negative intervention**

Did the IOC itself carry out acts of political intervention, which had a negative impact for the Olympic Games?

The undeniable influence of the Olympic Movement on the foreign policy, in particular, of the countries after the first 20 years of its appearance, does not necessarily mean that its intervention has always been positive, as analysed above. In at least two instances, immediately after the two World Wars, the IOC has shown a controversial reluctance to apply what was its main concern: that is, not to allow politics to alter its fundamental Principles.

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49 Centennial Olympic Congress Report, Congress of Unity, 1994, Paris.

When, after the end of the World War I, Antwerp hosted the VII Olympic Games, in 1920, it did not invite – with the indulgence of the IOC – the NOCs of the countries that lost the war. This action could very well be described as highly “politicised”, “punitive” and contrary to the Principles of the Charter. The implicit justification that these countries were to blame for the atrocities committed during the “Great War”, as this deadly war has been called, and the IOC’s stance on this decision, resulted in Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Turkey and Hungary not being invited. A decision that would not avoid criticism, though several years later.

At the 1948 London Games, the Antwerp scenario was repeated. With the same line of reasoning, Germany was not invited to those Games, as it was considered responsible for the disasters caused to humanity by World War II and the atrocities committed, mainly on grounds of race.

These were the Games of the victorious powers of World War II. Thus, there was no reaction by the IOC when the Organising Committee of the London Games did not send an invitation to the NOCs of Germany and Japan, while the Soviet Union did not take part, although it sent a delegation of observers as it was planning to organise the “Workers’ Olympiad” in the near future. Despite the fact that the non-invitation of the two recognised NOCs has been perceived as a politicised move by the IOC, it is strange that all scholars of the history of the Games have missed a very strong mitigating factor, which could be attributed to this stance; namely that, most likely, this tolerance was dictated by the fear of a particularly unfavourable situation that would arise from the coexistence in the same Olympic Village of athletes from rival warring countries, who only a few months before were in opposing war trenches! What is important, however, is that no one was upset by this decision, not even the IOC members in Germany.

However, it is very odd that, in none of the IOC’s Sessions, preceding or following the above Games, was there any discussion about the decision of the Organising Committees of Antwerp and London respectively, not to invite the NOCs of these countries. A decision, which, although it may be considered somewhat arbitrary, did not result in objections or negative publicity and thus was of little concern to scholars. Despite the fact that this exclusion concerned the defeated countries, which had been opposed to the powers of the Western world during both World Wars, the decision not to invite them is nonetheless a political act by the Organising Committees of the Games, fully approved by the IOC itself, and contrary to the Principles of its Charter.

It is worth noting that, in the case of the 1920 Games, Antwerp was awarded the Games mainly because Belgium was the first victim of the German invasion,

since the outbreak of hostilities, in 1914. It is also worth noting that, before the war, as Coubertin himself claimed, Budapest was slightly ahead in the preferences of the IOC members, among the candidate cities for the 1920 Games, but Hungary's participation in the war on the side of the defeated powers left it no hope of hosting the event. Although a year before the victorious powers had organised their own Games in Paris, the *"Inter-Allied Games"*, to celebrate the end of the war, at the Antwerp Games two actions that took place were on the verge of political provocation: a) the decision of the organisers to honour, during the Games, the athletes of the victorious powers that fell on the battlefield and b) the non-invitation to the Games of the Soviet Union, which was in the midst of internal conflicts after the Communist Revolution. In the first case, the IOC preferred to take a neutral stance and, in the second, it decided to retain Prince Urusov, a representative of the previous political situation, as one of its members (Senn, 1999, pp. 36-37).

In a similar case in our days, the persistent attempt by the Israelis to hold a memorial service during the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Games in honour of the athletes who lost their lives in the Olympic Village by Palestinian terrorists at the 1972 Munich Games, met with the strong resistance from the IOC. In fact, the IOC excluded this possibility, considering that it would be a purely political act that would undermine both the fundamental Principles of the Charter and the relations among the athletes participating in the Games.<sup>50</sup>

An article in the newspaper *L'Equipe*, dating back to 1961, is typical (Olympic Review, 1961, pp. 88-89). It discussed the IOC intervention in favour of granting visas to athletes from Eastern Germany at the time, so as to participate in the Portugal games: *"...It is undoubtedly thanks to the moral authority exercised by the International Olympic Committee, that sport has often solved problems when politicians failed. In the past heroic days, Bohemia and the Grand-Duchy of Finland were accepted to compete in the Olympic Games although both these countries were not politically speaking free, Bohemia was under Austro-Hungarian rule, whereas the Grand-Duchy of Finland was under tsarist rule. In more recent times, Olympism unified Germany and recognized simultaneously both: The Republic of China (Peking) and that of Formosa (Continental China withdrew from the Olympic Movement of her own accord). International federations do not have the same power or authority as that of the International Olympic Committee, far from it. Were the International Olympic Committee to become democratized in the way*

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50 <https://edition.cnn.com/2012/05/21/world/israel-ioc-munich-11/index.htm>

proposed by the Olympic Committee of the USSR, one can easily foresee what it would become, caught as it were between the devil and the deep blue sea! namely: nationalism and sport rivalry. International federations might be asked to exercise great caution when attributing championships to such and such country, in view of the fact that a certain country may not guarantee the giving of visas to visiting teams or that it may be too involved politically. 'Fortunately sport is undeniably an exceptional bond between nations, whereas politics are unfortunately too often just the reverse'".

Hulme (1990, p. 2), presents another view concerning the responsibility for the politicization of the Games. He believes that it is a mistake to conceive of States as being solely responsible for the politicizing of the Games. "...From the inception of the modern Olympic Movement at the Congress of Sorbonne, in 1894, to the first Olympiad two years later, from the post-World War I to the post-World War II Games, and from the first participation of the Soviet Union in the Olympic Games, in 1952, to the events of 1980, the leaders of the International Olympic Committee and of its various component organisations, have revealed an ambivalence and inconsistency regarding the role of politics in the Olympic Movement. The supposedly idealistic founder of the modern Games, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, himself reflected both the compelling desire to transform the Olympics from a contest among individuals to a fight for national glory and the yearning to use international sport to nurture the seeds of a more peaceful world".

Evaluating the 1896 Olympic Games, the first of the modern era, Coubertin observed: "...One may be filled with a desire to see the colours of one's club or college triumph in a national meeting, but how much stronger is the feeling when the (sic) colours of one's own country are at stake...! It was with these thoughts in mind that I sought to revive the Olympic Games. I have succeeded after many efforts... (I hope) it may be a potent, if indirect, factor in securing international peace" (Müller, 2000, p. 360).

Hulm (1990), also argues that the fact that Coubertin was neither overly concerned with the ostensibly pacific aspects of sports, nor averse to its direct political potential, may be surmised from a letter he sent to all IOC members after World War I: "...A completely new situation has arisen. Sports now stands at the forefront of the architects of victory. Thanks to sports, the dramatic improvisations of England and the United States thrust unexpected armies into the theatres of war. Thanks to sports, Sokol's valiant soldiers gathered victory laurels for their native countries even before their borders had been staked out and their freedoms ensured. Thanks to it, France, just as bravely but with incomparably

*greater strength than in 1870, was able to oppose the invasion with a rampart of hardened muscle. After France had generated such incomparable soldiers, sport was able to maintain their zeal and to quiet their cries of pain. In close proximity to the front, and in the distant sadness of prisoner-of-war camps they played football, fenced and boxed. The public conscience is aware of these things and appreciates them. A deserved enthusiasm, inspiration will sanctify the value of physical conditioning and proclaim the victory of sports".*

## **9. The Olympic Movement in the turbulent period of the "Cold War"**

The second phase of relationship between sports and politics was that commencing from the end of the World War II and continuing until the fall of the Berlin wall at the end of the '80s. There was an era of hard negotiation of ideas, political practice and economical pursuits. The Olympic Movement had already left behind the idealistic approach of Coubertin regarding the concept of Olympism, looking towards the Greek antiquity, and had confronted the challenges of the second half of the 20th century, along with all the weaknesses created by the end of the war and the East-West polarity

As Kanin (1981, p. 61), observes *"...The US and the USSR use both the public, politically peripheral nature of sport and the linkage between physical culture and national defence in their struggle. Sport is one of the favourite arenas for demonstration of the relative prowess of the New Soviet Man and All-American boy. Since the societies of both superpowers are future oriented, the use of sport in both sides of the iron curtain reflects the desire of each superpower to demonstrate superior vitality"*.

The naive idea that the Games could in some manner be isolated from international political rivalry was completely dispelled during the 35 years that intervened between the entry of the USSR into the IOC and the fall of the Berlin wall and the breakdown of orthodox communism. *"After Konstantin Andrianov and Aleksei Romanov took their seats as IOC members to USSR, the IOC Sessions were never the same!"* (Guttmann, 1994, p. 89).

Guttmann (1988 p. 554), analyses in a very comprehensive way this "middle phase" of the Olympic Movement evolution: *"...From 1952 to 1988, i.e. from the Helsinki Games to those of Seoul, the Olympic Movement had to face one of the most dramatic aspects of the modern Games, the sports rivalry between*

*the United States and the Soviet Union. Propagandists on both sides of the Iron Curtain, have presented the competition between Russians and Americans as a portentous symbolic struggle between the two ideological systems. As the Games have become increasingly important in the political sphere, the success or failure of the Olympic team as measured in the unofficial medal counts, has often overshadowed the performances of the men and women who ran, jumped, threw, wrestled, rode, and otherwise displayed their physical skills."*

Following the recognition of the Third World new countries' Olympic Committees, the majority of which were established with the support of the Soviet Union and the new satellites States in the eastern European framework, the IOC's structure was also consequently altered. In a short period of time, Adrianov and Romanov gained power, which was disproportionate to their actual contribution to the Olympic Movement. Politics entered into the very construction of the Olympics and for the next 35 years the course of the Games would be severely affected. However, as you will find within the next chapters, it did not lose its dynamic, but was instead strengthened.

Even though Tsarist Russia had participated in the 1912 Stockholm Games, without significant success, the Soviet Union chose to develop a sporting system based on cooperation and not on competitiveness characterising "bourgeois" sports. The Soviet Union changed its view on the Games after World War II. With a regime of absolute dominance and having accepted the role of the UN, Josef Stalin decided to put an end to the inward-looking athletic isolation of the country. At the same time, however, his desire to become a member of the "bourgeois" IOC had to be combined with the desire of the IOC to accept this.

But also, in the West, despite the dislike that they harboured for Communism and the Soviet Union, the idea of an internationalised Olympic Movement appeared nobler than political views. It became obvious that the power of the Eastern bloc countries in sports could not be ignored, especially when non-discrimination on the basis of political beliefs and respecting each person's individuality constituted fundamental Principles of the IOC's Charter. Of course, the Western bourgeois view of competitive sport had its own rules and its own stereotypes, which the Soviet Union had to accept in order to become a member of the Olympic family. The first major impediment was the notorious rule of amateurism. The best Soviet athletes were subsidised by the State, most often as members of the Soviet Army. Top sport performances were rewarded with apartments, promotions, cars and other material gifts. The second greatest obstacle was the clear separation of State and NOC.

Party/State intervention in the NOC of the Soviet Union prior to its readmission by the IOC was known and many members of the IOC reacted, albeit rather half-heartedly, to its full recognition until 1951 (Guttmann, 1988).

Morse (2003, p. 3), in a presentation he made at the Munk School of Global Affairs, at Toronto University, explained how sports became an accepted and well-used tool in the diplomatic armoury of the Cold War: *"... from the '40s, the tendency of Soviet Marxism to use sports as an international political tool was reinforced and, from the beginning of the '50s, sports became an important and often used tool in the diplomatic armoury of the Cold War. The cold war period between 1945 and 1989 was characterised by a bipolar world, divided into two ideologically opposite coalitions with nuclear armouries and a large number of non-aligned countries that were the object of rivalry between two super powers as regards their legitimacy and their influence. The capacity of sports to attract the masses was the best means of ensuring political legitimacy. The most characteristic example being East Germany, as well as all the States that had adopted the Soviet model, using sports to promote their international objectives. But this habit had become so entrenched that, by the end of the Cold War, most of the States that had gained their independence from the Soviet Union, considered their recognition by the International Olympic Committee and the right to send teams to the Olympic Games almost a greater priority than joining the UN; something that could be perceived as a precondition to gaining a legitimate place in the UN. It should be noted that the IOC recognised the Olympic Committees of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union"*.

The 45th IOC Session, held in Vienna, on 7 of May 1951, is considered one of the most momentous in the history of the modern Games, signalling the full penetration of the Cold War into the Olympic Movement. The minutes of this Session clearly show that everyone was ready to give ground in order to recognise the Soviet Union NOC as the IOC's new partner. The interventions of members during the meeting were telling. At the beginning of the meeting Sigfrid Edström, IOC President, proposed to the General Assembly that they accept the candidacy of the Soviet Union's NOC, invoking the content of the telegraphic application that was submitted, which unequivocally accepted the rules and the commitments of the IOC Charter.<sup>51</sup> One of the most conservative IOC members, Eric von Frenckell (Finland), supported the candidacy without comments. J. Loth (Poland) recognised the fact that a country with 200 million souls could not be outside of the Olympic

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51 Minutes of the 45th IOC Session, 1951, Vienna.



Movement. R. W. Seeldrayers (Belgium) welcomed the country's return to the Olympic Family, given that Russia, as he said, was already a part of it before the war. It was clear that the climate at the IOC had changed in favour of the admission of the Soviet Union and reservations had been set aside.

At the same Session, Albert Mayer (Switzerland) tried to strike a balance, without, however, objecting to the application for recognition. He noted the different treatment that a recognition application by a major State enjoyed compared to a smaller State, referring to the negative position held by the General Meeting during the previous year in a similar request by the Israeli NOC. He observed with scepticism that IOC members do not even know the Charter of the Soviet Union's NOC, the structure of the Committee, its relations with the State and its view on the matter of amateurism. Nevertheless, he did not oppose the proposal by the IOC's Executive Board to recognise the NOC under discussion, but he did however say: "*...that he was expressing his views as a matter of principle and justice*" (!)

The final proposal to accept the application was to be made by the Vice-President of the IOC who, a year later became its President, known for his conservative views and for being an advocate of amateurism and of the distinction between sports and politics. Brundage made a long presentation on the matter. He had a comprehensive record with evidence as to the status of sport in the Soviet Union and said: "*...we must follow, according to the IOC Charter, the same approach we always have, as was recently the case with Germany*". Other IOC members proceeded to put forth their observations, which however did not change the climate and finally the recognition of the NOC of Soviet Union was approved with 31 votes in favour and 3 abstaining. A year later, the recognition application of the East German NOC was accepted, also paving the way for its admission to the UN.

Even though the acceptance of the Soviet Union into the Olympic family was considered a major opening towards the countries of actually existing socialism and an indication of the superiority of Principles and Values of Olympism compared to the narrower view of its exploitation, what continued to greatly concern the romantics of those times was that the authenticity of the Games was based on the concept of amateurism. The proponents of this concept claimed that in the Soviet Union professionalism had a much stronger presence.

As Rider (2016, p. 32), characteristically wrote: this keen interest in winning and losing, made Brundage increasingly uneasy: "*...the Olympic Games are a contest between individuals, there is no score and no nation can 'win' the Games. If they*

*become contests between the hired gladiators of various nations with the idea of building national prestige or proving that one system of government is better than another, they will lose all purpose”.*

Brundage's views on these matters, however, were not sufficient to put a halt to a reality that had already started emerging in the international sports Movement and which, indirectly yet clearly, was set aside with the entry of the Soviet Union into the Olympic Family. This is especially the case when we consider that the IOC, in the same Charter, clearly reinforced nationalist rivalry with the athlete's oath, the opening ceremony parade, flags and anthems of the countries whose athletes win medals and the final official count of the medals won by a country.

It was now clear that with the emergence of a political rivalry between the socio-economic systems of the East and West after World War II, the Cold War would inevitably affect the Games. The structure of the Movement was, in reality, ideally suited to be included in Cold War rivalries. The issue of the conflict between the Coubertin amateurism at the end of the 19th century and the hidden professionalism that started appearing in the fifties and '60s in the socialist regimes, as well as in western democracies, started becoming less of an issue compared to the challenge offered by political rivalry.

Rider and Llewellyn (2015, p. 25), characteristically observe: “...Both super-powers, already committed to an ideological and cultural confrontation for the hearts and the minds of people around the planet, now jostled for supremacy on the globalized Olympic stage. The Soviets, after decades of abstaining from the “bourgeois” athletic competitions run by money-hungry capitalism, recognized that international sports represented a highly affective vehicle to further expand the Kremlin's sphere of influence, in the aftermath of the Word War II”.

It was true that sports in the Soviet bloc were directed by the State and that athletes received financial subsidies, depending on their successes in sports. The practice of State subsidies/sponsorship also existed before the Cold War era and the countries that normally were classified as democracies engaged in it in various manners. When Brundage blamed the Soviet authorities for the economic benefits and contested the amateur status of their athletes, in reality he was punishing the suspicious activities of athletes in the US and other western countries, because concealed professionalism flourished in the western democracies that enjoyed free competition, in the form of university scholarships and high-profile positions in sports companies for successful athletes. The IOC attempted to limit those infringements and to control the manner in which the NOCs were managed, but the

results did not meet with success either at that time or in the years that followed. They could not put an end to professionalism.

As Albert Mayer, IOC member for Switzerland, admitted to Andrianov of the Soviet Union: *"... unfortunately we live an era where materialism governs the world and I don't think that I am mistaken in saying that 90% (if not all) elite athletes participating in the Olympic Games have received money for these Games or others"* (Riordan, 2002, p. 50).

*"In the mid-'80s, US athletes were sponsored by companies such as Nike and Reebok, without, however, being banned from the Games. In other words, athletes were entitled to maintain their "amateur" status, whilst also receiving money for their sport performance, appearance and product promotion"* (Sage, 2010, p. 195).

As Lebedeva (2008, p. 47) notes *"...In the '80s, when athletes performed at the stage, provided by the Olympic Games, they represented "American individualism, democracy and freedom" on the one hand and "soviet collectivism, care for the many and democratic centralism (needs informing a planned economy)", on the other. Clearly, the goal of politics was to show the advantages of the different political systems via use of the athletes."*

In the analysis of the Games, which were marked by political interventions and are presented in the second part of the book, the exploitation of this major sports-cultural event to satisfy ideological and political targets can be seen clearly, culminating in the '60s, '70s and '80s, in other words the heart of the Cold War.

## **10. Provoking the Olympic Movement**

Undoubtedly the Games' course, from their revival until the middle of the previous century, was not devoid of external interventions with purely political and societal motivation. The fact that the Games were revived and grew mainly on European territory, gave them a Western, "eurocentric" character, something that was completely normal considering that, in their initial form, the Games addressed themselves to the ultra-conservative society of the end of the 19th century. The internationalism of the institution, greatly longed for by Coubertin, may have been attained over time, but it never ceased to be criticised on a political, religious and social level, mainly due to its "bourgeois" character. The Games were often accused of focusing on the upper class and the privileged. Coubertin's initial approach to Olympic athletes having amateur status contributed to this.

From early on, parallel international sports competitions started appearing,

similar to the Games, and each event targeted specific social and political categories of citizens. These efforts remained incomplete and never managed to attain the glow of the Olympic Games. Amongst these “caricatures”, three were the Games with the greatest visibility:

1) The **“Workers’ Olympiads”** began in the era when the Communist Party started gaining ground in every country in Europe. The conviction of the International Workers’ Movement that the real Olympic spirit could not be expressed by an Olympic Movement governed by elitist leadership resulted in an attempt to organise international sports games, in which workers and women would take part since, as is well known, women were initially excluded from the Games. The “Workers’ Olympiads” declared that they were opposed to any kind of chauvinism, sexism, racism and social exclusiveness and, in contrast with the Games which were based on rivalry amongst nations, they emphasised internationalism, friendship, solidarity and peace. These games differed significantly from all other international games because they were not limited to athletes alone, but rather aimed at massively mobilising workers, men and women who wanted to participate. That is why the number of participants was in the thousands. Another characteristic was that participants did not represent a State, which is why there were no national symbols, but only red flags and, besides the rudimentary sports competitions, at each Olympiad poems were recited, songs and dances were presented, and political speeches delivered (Riordan, 1991, p. 38).

The first, unofficial “Workers’ Olympiad” was held as a test in Prague, in 1921, in which 13 countries participated, and the second, official, Olympiad was staged in Frankfurt, in 1925, with 11 participating countries. The third “Workers’ Olympiad” took place in Vienna, with the participation of 26 countries and 100,000 athletes! The last was staged in Antwerp, in 1937, and was nothing more than a joint event with Red Sport International, which organised the Spartakiads.

2) The first important international event to be hosted on Soviet soil was the **“Spartakiad of the People”**, organised in Moscow, in August 1928, at the same time as the 6th Comintern Congress. The games were intended mainly to show how much the USSR had progressed in the field of physical education and to counterbalance bourgeois sports, especially the Games that were held in the same year in Amsterdam, and brought together a large number of working athletes from foreign countries. However, international participation remained relatively weak: 542 men and 70 women from 12 countries, compared to 3,000 men and 879 women from the Soviet Union.

The first edition rivalling the Games was followed by another three attempts to

organise Spartakiads on an international scale. In 1931, at Berlin, the Games resulted in failure as the authorities of the German city banned them from being staged, with the exception of certain football matches, whilst the two Winter Spartakiads staged in Oslo, in 1928 and in 1936, had a low level of participation and the results were not recorded.

After the Soviet Union joined the IOC, in 1952, the Spartakiads became a domestic affair, encompassing all Soviet regions, with thousands of entries in the preliminaries and finals staged in Moscow. The first Soviet "Spartakiad of the Peoples of USSR" was held in Moscow, in 1956, its summer edition continued up to 1991 and its winter edition ran from 1960 to 1990. Spartakiads were organised two years before the Games were staged. These were events with a great deal of publicity, in which many athletes and physical education associations participated and the programme was not limited to games, but also to exceptional general interest displays. Through this event, Soviet leadership attempted to showcase its citizens' high spirits and the successes of Soviet youth in the physical education culture. At the same time, the increasing number of participating athletes aimed at proving the popularity of sports in the Soviet Union, under its specific ideological-economic structure. Finally, the celebrations around traditional forms of sports, which had developed in various areas, were used to boost the morale of citizens throughout Soviet territories.

Even though their purpose was to evolve as a Soviet counterbalance to the bourgeois model of the Games of the West, the Spartakiads only had a minimal influence on the nature of the Games. The Spartakiads were mainly domestic displays and, with the passage of time, the participation of major names from classical sports decreased.

The fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union's model of sport completely erased any form of showcasing Eastern communist athlete culture. Of course, Russian athletes, after 1990, continued to deliver top sports performances, proving that the concept of excellence was not inherent to the Soviet policy regarding sports, but rather completely connected to the general sports/Olympic culture developed in young athletes, wherever they may be.

3) The classic case of a crude and simultaneously negative intervention of politics in sport and specifically in the Olympic Movement was, without a doubt, the organisation of the "**Games of the Newly Emerging Forces**" (GANEFO). In 1962, just a few years after gaining its independence, Indonesia was on the brink of organising the Asian Games, an event that had been approved and had been placed under the

auspices of the IOC. The government that rose to power after the country gained its independence, considered that organising such a major event would give it the capacity to convey its ideological positions to a broader socialist political sphere through sport. They therefore considered inviting other countries, outside Asia, transforming the Games into a counter-Olympiad.

The fact that Indonesia named the Games “The Games of the Newly Emerging Forces” and sought to gain participation of other countries beyond Asia did not annoy the IOC. However, the Indonesian government’s refusal to grant visas to delegations from Israel and Taiwan was disturbing and led to the immediate removal of a) its auspices over the Games and b) its recognition to the Indonesian Olympic Committee.

In a speech, where he essentially renamed the Asian Games and called them GANEFO, President Sukarno claimed that: “...sports can never be separated from politics” and that “...international competitions must be handled by government representatives” (Xu Guoqi, 2008, p. 52). This was a denial of one of the most basic and important Principles of the Olympic Movement, that of its autonomy.

The IOC requested that the International Federations take measures against an event whose organisers’ statements brought it openly into conflict with the Olympic Movement just the year before the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games. The International Federations, including IAAF and the Federation Internationale de Natation (the Swimming Federation), announced to their National Federations that any athletes who took part in the GANEFO would be ineligible to participate in the Tokyo Games. Finally, 46 countries participated in the GANEFO, with athletes who were not of Olympic Games caliber. Only China and North Korea sent their best athletes, who dominated the games due to their great superiority over athletes from other countries.

The GANEFO turned into what essentially was a sports farce and in 1967, when they were repeated, they attracted the participation of only 17 countries and they were abolished. These games will remain in the history of sport as an unlucky political attempt to change the nature of Olympism and its Values, something which they did not achieve, conversely they managed to make them even stronger.

The IOC Executive Board, which met in Tokyo, in October 1964, with delegates of the NOC, discussed the issue of the GANEFO and the impact they had on the Olympic Movement and on athletes.<sup>52</sup> At this meeting, Avery Brundage, President

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52 IOC Executive Board meeting, in the presence of representatives of National Olympic Committees, Tokyo, October 1964.

of the IOC, declared significantly: *"sport like the fine arts ranks above all politics. It must by no means be used as a tool or a weapon for political purposes or propaganda"*. Furthermore, at his speech at the opening of the IOC General Session in Munich, in the closing act of his tenure of the Presidency and before handing over his position to Lord Killanin, he did not fail, amongst other things, to refer to the meaning of Olympism: *"... 'Olympic' is the magic word today and unquestionably many will seek to use it for their own advantage. The Games have the admiration, the respect, and the support of the public because they are idealistic and free from political chicanery and dollar signs"*.<sup>53</sup>

Also, of interest is the letter sent by Alexander, IOC member for Kenya (7 January, 1969), with which he highlights to Brundage the dangers of an "excessiveness of nationalism" on the occasion of the GANEFO: *"... another point that must be explained [to the new nations] is the organization of international sport and that the countries will not participate in the IOC, itself, but that their National Olympic Committees will be recognized so that they may participate in the Olympic Games. I earnestly believe that members of the International Olympic Committee must in their attitude be truly international and that we must get away from this identification with specific countries. One danger facing the Olympic Movement is an excessiveness of nationalism and this certainly should not be allowed to appear in the governing body itself. A mass of nations, each represented on the IOC will, I am sure, produce the same result as is happening in the UN with power blocks forming in order to press a certain philosophy"* (Chatziestathiou, Henry, Theodoraki & Al-Tauqi, 2006, p. 289).

We are well aware of the origin of this double-dealing, which politicians, overeager for power, like to represent as the reaction of previously colonised peoples, against their former masters. It had its origin in the religious and political discrimination of the 4th Asiatic Games, which were celebrated in 1962, in Jakarta. This discrimination was – and this is the worst feature – a rejection of that liberty, which is claimed by the Emerging Forces. Under specious pretexts, in reality coldly calculated ones, the Indonesian organisers of the Asiatic Games refused the inclusion of Israel and of Nationalist China. Yet another instance when sport is made a mockery of by, on the one hand, the all-too-familiar anti-Semitism and on the other, the political confrontation between Capitalists and Communists.

These two opposing forces or antagonists, which the Olympic spirit had partially succeeding in eradicating in its own particular sphere, have at least been

<sup>53</sup> Minutes of the 73rd IOC Session, August 1972, Munich

lessened. Confronted with such an undermining of its dearest Principles, the IOC could no longer allow itself to sit on the fence without completely losing face. It therefore withdrew its moral support from the Asiatic Games, then its Executive Board suspended the Indonesian Olympic Committee which had just given proof of its dependence on a political theory, which was utterly unsportsmanlike. The Indonesian Olympic Committee, in imitation of Communist China, withdrew from the Olympic world; and the President of the Indonesian Republic, making the quarrel a personal one, founded the "GANEFO" which was an abbreviation for the Games of the New Emerging Forces. For world Olympics, it tended both to divide and to produce two movements, one in opposition to the other. The political harmony of "GANEFO" was – and we are under no illusions – sufficiently skilful and well-organised to produce a break, the effect of which would have repercussions in the world for many decades.

The decision taken by the 61st Session of the IOC, at Innsbruck, in 1964, regarding the GANEFO Games is characteristic: *"...the International Olympic Committee considered the position arising out of the GANEFO. As these were not under the patronage of the International Olympic Federations, except in so far as National Olympic Committees countenanced them. This point is being actively pursued. The International Olympic Committee however notes that the GANEFO Games were admittedly political in conception and aims, openly ignored International Federations and National Federations, and included invitations to non-member countries. The International Olympic Committee states that such aims and actions are completely opposed to Olympic Ideals and threaten the very foundations of amateur sport. Under these circumstances, it welcomes firm actions by International Federations concerned".*<sup>54</sup>

## **11. Boycotting the Olympic Ideals**

The most classic form of political intervention in the Olympic Games, with a direct impact overall on sports but also the ideas sport supports, without a doubt, was when a series of States, for different reasons in each instance, took recourse to boycotting the Games. The period of the Cold War in the political rivalry between East and West was transferred for a long time to sport, mainly through abstention from the Games. Of course, it was not only the Soviet Union and the US that tried to "punish", "impose a view" or "avenge" political behaviours through this process.

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54 Minutes of the 61st IOC Session, 1964, Innsbruck.



The countries of the so-called third world, which emerged mainly in Africa in the '60s and '70s after the anti-colonial revolutions, quickly managed to gain a significant presence in international sports due to the physicality of their athletes. Thanks to their important performances, especially in track and field, they soon became undisputed participants in sport competitions and their participation in the Games raised the latter to a high level. Therefore, it was only a matter of time before these countries would enter the political game of impressions.

Abstention from the Games in order to impose their political will was not invented by governments during the Cold War era. Similar signs, of lesser but particular importance, had emerged even before World War I.

Boycotts that happened at different times did not have the same objectives, but they did have one common denominator: the intent to blackmail conditions and assert a political or ideological position on an international level. On the surface, those threatening to resort to such an extreme measure always had a "just cause". In most instances, however, the objective causes were different and had to do with the more general situation that existed in relations between States at that time and the forces that were put into play by strong political forces on the weaker members of the world community.

The first threat of not participating in the Games was issued, believe it or not, by the US, in 1912, for procedural reasons! They demanded participation in the procedures of organising the Games; otherwise they would refuse to take part!!

The phenomenon of non-participation in this celebration of sports and culture started to appear essentially in the 1936 Berlin Games, when Spain and France did not participate due to the Nationalist Socialist regime that governed at that time Germany. The US also threatened that they would not participate, but, in the end, the opinion of Avery Brundage held sway and, thankfully for the institution and for Olympic Values, they did not proceed with the boycott, allowing sports to win out over propaganda in its own home court. Brundage, an advocate of non-involvement of sport in politics, was at that time President of the American Athletic Union and strongly opposed the public opinion on non-participation in the "Nazi Games", as most called them, considering that the political situation, whatever it may be, should not affect the development of sport and the Principles and Values of Olympism. Brundage defended this theory throughout his life and even in adverse situations, proving that, although described by many as a controversial figure, he served faithfully the Principles he believed in.

Observing the "Political Intervention Curve",<sup>55</sup> which shows the major threats against the Games for political reasons, it is easy to ascertain that, after World War II, there was a trend to take advantage of this unique global event by the two victorious superpowers, the US and the Soviet Union, which represented two diametrically opposed political, economic and social cultures. The rest of the nations aligned themselves around these Powers, others intentionally and others perforce, creating two massive Blocks whose influence did not take long to rear its head in all its magnitude over sporting activities as well.

In Melbourne, in 1956, a series of States decided not to participate in the Games, invoking the *"unjust and illegal intervention of the Soviets in Hungary"*.<sup>56</sup> Certain other States abstained due to the conditions of war in Egypt;<sup>57</sup> and China did not participate because it did not agree with the name given to Taiwan! In other words, what did those countries do?

They transferred their rivalry with other nations to the world of the Olympics, where the universal Values of fair play, excellence, respect of diversity, solidarity and good fellowship are transmitted through fair sporting competition to every citizen of every country, without distinction. It wasn't, however, only the US and the Soviet Union who provocatively attempted to take advantage of the Games politically. Already, starting in the '60s, a new group of States rose from the struggle against colonialism in Africa, and they gradually started expanding to take over an increasingly greater part of the international sports Movement. After the many years of repression, these nations became a new source of ideas which adopted Values similar to those of Olympism. Equality and respect for diversity supported the anti-racism Movement, which had strong ideological foundations. They sought to promote these Principles and impose them on the world-wide community, not, however, without external guidance, which in most instances had its roots in the Soviet Union.

This created another source of pressure in the sports field, which would end up playing a significant role in the boycott issue. A significant factor was also the maintenance of the racist regime in South Africa, which, with its behaviour, provided reasons and a starting-point to promote the "just cause" of the oppressed, in order to demand more with threats of group abstention from the Games.

The three major boycotts that stigmatised the Olympic Movement were those of the 1976 Montreal Games, where 34 countries, mainly from Africa, abstained;

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55 See relevant table in Part Two, p. 185.

56 Spain, The Netherlands and Switzerland.

57 Egypt, Iraq and Lebanon.

the 1980 Moscow Games, where 66 countries influenced by the US abstained; and the 1984 Los Angeles Games, where 18 countries within the Soviet Union's sphere of influence abstained.

The Cold War constitutes a bitter memory for sport in general and for Olympism in particular. So intense was the level of political interference by these opposing sides and their supporters in the Games, particularly in resorting to boycotts, that when the Berlin Wall finally came down, boycotts as a form of political intervention in the Olympic Movement magically went away, and things became a far calmer and more easily controlled. Finally, the boycott must be adjudged to have had a deleterious effect on the Olympic Movement in general. *"The fractionation of the Games on "East-West" terms begun by the 1980 boycott, continued in 1984, yet showed signs of improvement in 1988 under the influence of the image-conscious Gorbachev regime"* (Hulme, 1990, p. 88).

Was the attempt to impose political views through boycotts successful, irrespective of where they sprang from and of what cause they served? History showed that it was not! The instances where the IOC succumbed to the pressure of a boycott were very few indeed and took place because the grounds of those threatening that they would seek recourse in this extreme form of pressure were very strong. Without a doubt, however, the Olympic Movement came out the winner in this long-term conflict, as it contrived, after this exceedingly difficult period, to maintain its dynamics and impose the terms of the game. The IOC became an equal interlocutor with the UN, supporting the self-sufficiency and autonomy of sports in practice at every level of its activities.

During the period of the boycotts, two schools of thought developed concerning whether this measure was expedient. On the one side were supporters of the view that ideas should not be limited by boundaries and rules that seek to impede how they are spread. Through this most popular sporting and cultural event, the world would be informed about what was happening on the international political stage. Every major event that entered a citizen's home through television, the internet, etc., was viewed as the best means to promote political views. Consequently, by refraining from participating in the Games, a political standpoint could spread its views with greater ease, as it would be certain to be a central matter of discussion on all social levels of the vast majority of countries.

The other side perceived boycotts from the point of view of the athletes. If a nation chose not to participate in the Games, for whatever cause, however powerful that might be ideologically, it would deprive its athletes of the ability

to compete with fellow athletes from all around the world at the highest possible level, despite having sacrificed many of the simple pleasures of life, most often for four entire years. Samaranch commented regarding the boycotts: *"... one thing is certain: such decision can only cause harm to the whole Olympic Movement"* because *"...always those who suffer most are the athletes, and the athletes alone"* (Sarantakes, 2011, p. 253). Samaranch's position was forthright when asked by the author, during his stay in Athens for the presentation of his book on the years of his Presidency in the IOC, to comment on the impact of a boycott on sport: *"... those who decide to use sport, and in particular the Olympic Games, for their own purposes, to the point of withdrawing athletes from them, brutally harm Olympism but, most importantly, they harm their own athletes because they do not respect their beliefs and the fight they give for many years to achieve an honest Olympic victory"*.

The fact that this second viewpoint was far more easily accepted by most people created a bulwark against the political sirens seeking to take advantage of the Olympic Movement through this harsh form of intervention. It is further certain that boycotting the Games is now a bad memory, which has completed its cycle. It is, however, a memory able to indicate the extent to which political intervention can go on the one hand, and, on the other hand what pressure the Olympic ideals can withstand. Criticizing the double boycott of the Soviet Union and the US, the Director of the U.S. Olympic Committee, Kenneth Clarke (1988, p. 112), argued that: *"...boycott is another consequence showing the difference between "nationalism" and "patriotism". Olympism must accept the world as it is. It must, however, be careful not to exacerbate and fuel negative political situations. Now that the two major Olympic Committees (the Soviet Union and the US) made use of this solution without any benefit, they found, contrary to what they expected, that the Olympic Movement emerged victorious and weakened by their abstention! Let us hope that the political leaders of this world will seek in the future, for their statements and their goals, other places to act and not the Olympic Movement"*.

*"The bottom line on Olympic boycotts is that the politicians who call for them, do nothing more than eviscerate their own citizens, to no useful purpose. Such boycotts are political failures; that the governments who order them appear inept; that ineptness is the most terrible political sin; and that no politician wishes to appear to be inept. That is why political boycotts of the Olympics do not work. They are an ineffective tool in this context and the proponents are shown to be ineffective"* (Pound, 2004, p. 102).

As IOC member Pal Schmitt declared during the Centennial Olympic Congress of Unity, in 1994, held in Paris: "...politics were present in every sphere of human society. In this respect, it is clear that boycotting was the crudest form of political interference in sport".<sup>58</sup>

## 12. Terror over the rings

On 22 March 2016, after the tragic bombing attack on the Brussels airport by ISIS terrorists, Bach, President of the IOC, made the following statement: "...such odious attacks are directed against all human and Olympic Values. We stand side by side with the Belgian and European people. These and other terrorist acts in different countries show that the Olympic Values of understanding, respect and peace are more important than ever for our world".<sup>59</sup>

Even though this terrorist strike had not directly targeted the Olympic family, President Bach sought with his statement to link it to Olympic Values, which are a compass for the road to peace and reconciliation.

The Olympic Games, and the Olympic Movement in its entirety, have in several instances been affected by terrorist practices and even more frequently with terrorist threats. It isn't hard to explain why. Because the Games are globally identifiable, highly symbolic and able to gather the world's attention, they are favourite grounds for promoting ideologies either by a simple individual protest such as that carried out by black American athletes in Mexico, or by co-ordinated political protest such as the boycotts of the Games, which were carried out in many instances, or else directly through acts of raw violence, such as the events of Munich which thankfully have never been repeated since.

Terrorism has repeatedly used the institution of the Games to threaten a society that has built its foundations on democracy and freedom of thought. From a propaganda perspective, the selection of the Games by terrorists was undoubtedly very successful. Particularly, when the first, and fortunately the last, terrorist strike during a sporting event took place at a Games which wanted, mainly for historical reasons, to send the message of political change to a country that had, a few years before, stigmatized the Olympic Movement with the 1936 Berlin Games.

Until the Munich tragedy, international terrorism had not dared attack the Games. There were many reasons behind this. First, because the phenomenon

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58 Centennial Olympic Congress Report, 1994, Paris.

59 <https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1035650/bach-condemns-odious-brussels-terror-attacks-as-sporting-world-mourns>

of international terrorism was not so widespread. Second, because its goals were always specific and not blind hits. At the same time, the terrorists obviously didn't want to offend other population groups. So, the best-known acts of violence were mainly targeted airline hijackings and isolated actions within the closed circle of a society, including bank robberies, hostage takings and kidnappings of specific individuals or the destruction of facilities that were of general interest. Third, because they wanted to have public opinion on their side supporting ideologies or extreme religious views. Consequently, untargeted actions against the whole of society would not have aided their goals.

The 1972 Munich Olympic Games were heralded by the German organisers as the "Games of Peace and Joy". This was a deliberate attempt to distance these Games from the 1936 Berlin Olympics, where Nazi symbolism overshadowed other aspects of the Games. Despite the hopes of the organisers, the 1972 Games have been remembered for the bloodbath caused by eight Palestinian terrorists. (Kennelly & Toohey, 2007). As Moore observes (1996, p. 30): *"The terrorist attack stipulated the modern Olympics great loss of innocence"*.

When, on 5 September 1972, Palestinian terrorists, members of the Arab terrorist organisation Black September, invaded the Olympic Village where the Israeli athletes were staying, no one imagined that this raid would have the consequences it finally had. The armed terrorists killed on the spot two Israeli athletes who tried to stop them before catching 9 other athletes, whom they held hostages, demanding the release of 200 of their compatriots held in Israeli jails. Israel refused and the terrorists, at the end of a long negotiation, attempted to board a plane they had requested to take them outside the German border. At the airport, German police officers were waiting and arrested three of them, while three others escaped. The Israeli hostages were executed in cold blood by the terrorists during the exchange of fire, during which two other Palestinians and a police officer were tragically killed.

Richard Pound, a prominent member of the IOC, notes in his book *Inside the Olympics* (2004, p. 12): *"...since 1972, when Black September terrorists infiltrated the Olympic Village, capturing and killing 11 Israeli athletes, security has been a major concern for Games organizers. Up to that time, in the more innocent days, Olympic Village security had focused mainly on keeping the male athletes out of the female section"*.

Of course, the appeal of the Olympics to terrorist groups stems from the fact that they are a mega-event with great media appeal and thus an enormous reach into people's homes. Indeed, as noted by the Black September spokesperson a week

following the attacks: *"The Olympiad arouses the people's interest and attention more than anything else in the world. The choice of the Olympics, from the purely propagandistic viewpoint was 100% successful. It was like painting the name of Palestine on a mountain that can be seen from the four corners of the earth"* (Miah & Garcia, 2012, p. 71).

Thirty years later, in 2006, the Palestinian view of the events in Munich had not changed. Mohammad Oudeh, a member of the terrorist group responsible for the Munich attack confess to Journalist Zeina Karam: *"... before Munich we were just terrorists. After Munich, people started asking: Who are these terrorists? What are they asking for? Nobody had the slightest idea of Palestine before Munich!"* (Karam, 2006).

The terrorist attack in Munich demonstrated two key facts: First, how the institution had become attractive for exploitation by outside players because of its global renown; and second, how susceptible and vulnerable was the space, in which the Games are staged. A characteristic example is the text used by the "Black September" Palestinians in their 1972 attack in Munich to "justify" why they sought to hit this global event: *"...we are aware that sport is the religion of the Western world... this is why we decided to use the Olympic Games, the most holy ceremony of this religion, in order to draw the world's attention"* (Galily, Yarchi & Tamir, 2015, p. 1000).

*"The attack was considered successful for a number of reasons, not the least of which was the extensive and ongoing global media coverage it received. Broadcasting of the Games had utilised satellite technology since the 1964 Tokyo Olympics, a move which had dramatically increased the event's international audience"* (Kennelly & Toohey, 2007, p. 6).

The Munich strike is an exception in their tactics, from the result and consequences of which it was obvious that it would never be repeated. The failure of this attempt, which was unanimously condemned by the world public opinion, led to a quarter century of peaceful Games, from the point of view of their organisation, although the security measures that had to be taken by subsequent Organising Committees and their countries were greatly augmented. The steadfast and absolute position taken by the IOC expressed in the now famous words of Avery Brundage, then President of the IOC: *"The Games must go on... and we must continue our effort to keep them clean, pure and honest and try to extend the sportsmanship of the athletic field into other areas"*, greatly contributed to reinforcing the position and Principles of the Olympic Movement, creating a different approach for the oncoming threat (Guttmann, 1992, p. 140).



Avery Brundage:  
*"The Games must go on..."*

Kennelly and Toohey (2007, p. 14), summarise very clearly the consequences that followed the Munich massacre: *"...For the most part, the Olympic Games have experienced unsuccessful terrorist plots. However, on two occasions in the period under investigation, terrorism has directly caused fatalities and left an indelible mark on the event. The Games are an attractive target due to: (a) the international media coverage they receive; (b) the congregating of tens of thousands of people in a small area; (c) the movement of thousands of people through public areas such as airports, train stations and nearby public spaces; and (d) the challenge posed by the aspiration of organisers to maintain a security presence, whilst retaining the event's festive atmosphere. While the precautionary principle has not been articulated as an official policy of Olympic organisers, there is evidence to suggest that it has been applied in varying degrees since the 1972 Munich Olympic tragedy"*.

Following the Munich incidents, the issue of the Games' security in all venues has been the priority of all the future Organizing Committees, since nothing should be taken for granted in the operation of the venues, and especially of the ones inside the Olympic Village. Apart from the sports facilities, State security extended its checks on people entering the country right up to the entrance points for the country, as was the case in the 1988 Seoul Games in South Korea.

The second terrorist attack that took place during the Games was in Atlanta. On the morning of 27 July 1996, a bomb exploded near a bandstand in the city's



Centennial Olympic Park. Two people were killed and over 100 others injured. Though a 33-year-old security guard, Richard Jewell, was originally held in connection with the bombing, he was subsequently cleared as a suspect. The person responsible for this attack was a fanatic anti-abortion campaigner (!).<sup>60</sup> Even if this event had had neither a political nor ideological background, it is still recorded as a terrorist attack, which took advantage of the publicity surrounding the Games to convey this fanatic belief to the rest of the world. The incident signified that cultural events held in conjunction with the Games were also a target.

Unlike the Munich incident, little further information on the Atlanta case has reached the public (Atkinson & Young, 2002).

As Richards, Fussey, and Silke observe (2011, p. 4): *"...attacks such as in Munich and in Atlanta cast long shadows over any effort to understand the Olympics, the threats it faces and the precautions that must be taken. It is no revelation to suggest that the Olympics provides terrorists with a unique opportunity to publicise their goals. Terrorism is a form of communication intended to send a message to target audiences. What better vehicle for global dissemination than the Olympics, whose watching audience are said to amount to billions? It is estimated that over one billion people watched the opening ceremony for the Beijing Games in 2008, and the total number of hours spent viewing the Summer Games now consistently exceeds over 34 billion for each Games (International Olympic Committee, 2010). Such overwhelming media interest has not been lost on terrorist organisations, with the Munich attack itself representing a telling example. In one day, proclaimed Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian cause gained more attention than any number of international conferences. Munich certainly served as a warning that future Olympic events could be similarly exploited by terrorists for their publicity value if nothing else"*.

There have not been many terrorist acts related to an Olympic Games and, in any case, they were not committed during the course of the event, except in Atlanta.

The 1992 Barcelona Games were not imuner from the terrorist phenomenon. Three years prior to the Games, following an arrest of Basques autonomists in Bearritz in France, the police was informed that terrorist attacks were planned in Barcelona. From the collection of data, it was revealed that there was a connection between the autonomists who were arrested and the people in charge of ETA.

60 <http://www.findingdulcinea.com/news/on-this-day/July-August-08/On-this-Day--Bomb-Explodes-in-Atlanta-s-Olympic-Park.html>

Ideed a document seemed to contain instructions for operations during the Games (Thompson, 2017).

In 1991, bombing attacks in Catalonia killed more than 50 citizens and most of these attacks were connected with the Olympic Games.<sup>61</sup> These threats led the government of Spain to come to agreement with ETA for a temporary truce and the Games were consequently held without any terrorist attacks taking place.

Before the 2000 Sydney Games the secret services of Australia and New Zealand prevented a terrorist operation, which aimed to blow a reactor in Australia during the Games, by arresting a group of terrorists in New Zealand. In the same year, in a house near a sports facility, 5 people were arrested after having a large amount of explosives in their possession, which were to be used during the Games (Toohey & Taylor, 2008).

In the 2004 Athens Games, the Greek State drew on the assistance of NATO and a specially created international security advisory council to help protect Greece's vast exposed coastline, airspace and Games venues.

Application of the precautionary principle has also resulted in an increase in the potential threats organisers attempt to counteract. For example, the 1995 Aum Shinrikyo sarin nerve gas attack saw subsequent Olympic security preparations include medical stockpiles in an attempt to cover potential acts of biochemical terrorism. The task and cost of reducing the risk of terrorism is complicated by the trend towards more transnational, flexible and creative forms of contemporary terrorism (Johnson, 2001).

All the above cases, as well as other threats of terrorist attacks that troubled the Organizing Committees of Seoul, Salt Lake (from Al Qaeda), Athens (from the terrorist group "17th November"), Beijing (from the supporters of Tibet independence), Sochi (from the Chechens opponents) are considered to be an anticipated development of attempts to exploit this grand sports/cultural event for the publicity of different, absurd, in many cases, demands.

However, the positive side of these incidents was that such threats were not carried out after all. Perhaps not due to the strict measures that have been taken, but possibly because the terrorists realized that a hit on the heart of the Olympic Movement would cause, in reality, a universal reaction and aversion to their demands. The case of Munich has shown that public opinion, at a global level, has neither justified nor forgiven such methods of promoting demands and positions, fair or not.

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61 <https://www.csmonitor.com/1992/0401/01061.html>

These events can be used as a basis for a study aiming to assess the extent to which the terrorist threat and security problems have affected the plans of the candidate cities, the selection of the candidate cities, the assessment of the cost of organising the Games and the implementation of strategies and security measures.

However, it is interesting to examine what has changed since the days of the Munich Games and to what extent the Olympic endeavour is under threat today from corresponding acts of terrorist violence.

**First the motivation behind the attack.** It is strange for someone to seek to "justify" a terrorist action, particularly when the victims have nothing to do with the executioner. A terrorist action cannot have a motive. There is no distinction between good and bad terrorist actions. They all should be condemned. Despite this, in the past, a number of such actions had a purely political or ideological nature. Ever since 9/11, however, all terrorist actions are impersonal. Particularly those we have encountered in our everyday lives over the past few years, and which threaten to impact the Olympic endeavour are actions of a gang that paraphrases the Principles of the religion they claim to espouse, by cruelly terminating lives and wrecking civilisations. Therefore, they are hard to locate and even harder to negotiate with. This is why they are ever more dangerous.

**Second, the target of a terrorist act.** Although by many, the Atlanta episode is placed into the same category as that of the Munich slaughter, there was one basic different feature: the target! In Munich, as well as in many smaller operations, there was a specific target. In Atlanta appeared a new form of terrorism: a blind target! The bomber of the Olympic park was not aiming at a specific group of people, just anyone who would be close to the explosion! In other words whoever had the ill luck to be enjoying themselves in a Park dedicated to peace and reconciliation. This was when the extent of the danger that the Organising Committees of subsequent Games faced became apparent.

**Third, the means utilised.** If we accept that the target of terrorist violence changed, after 9/11 the means of committing terrorism also changed. The means were no longer a long-range detonation of an explosive device but the terrorists blowing themselves up! A new form of terrorism that has shaken up mainly western societies cannot be either foreseen or controlled! As we had unfortunately entered a new age of an even harsher terrorist expansionism that did not distinguish between countries, races, religions, but simply sought to express ideas and obsessions through violence and the denial of any cultural heritage. Undoubtedly every Olympic event in the future shall be called upon to deal with this challenge with

greater security forces and limitations to free access to the spectacles they offer.

**Fourth, the modern form of terrorism is not interested in promoting its ideas.** We have seen in previous chapters, that the Games really offer a platform to promote protest and propaganda, whether political or ideological. The terrorism we experience today has no need of the Olympic Games to promote its positions. It seeks to “provoke” and to “punish”. Therefore, it chooses as its targets places where unsuspecting civilians gather in great numbers, many of whom may even embrace the ideas of their attackers. Its intent is destruction, irrespective of where it spreads. This is precisely what makes it even more dangerous to the organisation of a major sports and cultural event, such as the Games. The security measures taken in each instance are massive, expensive and usually effective, where they have to monitor specific closed venues, such as a sporting venues. Nobody can enter without undergoing checks and the detection equipment is always upgraded.

After the Twin Towers attack in New York, on 9/11, it was natural that there would be a change in economic circumstances of the Organising Committees by way of adjustment in an effort to contain the risk or at least take preventive measures. Therefore, it was completely natural for the first Games that followed the event, the 2004 Athens Games, to be an attractive target for terrorists that would want to spread their message to an audience of millions of spectators around the world by striking the sacred land of western democracy. This was the first time that the Games felt besieged in this manner (Migdalovitz, 2004).

Security for the Athens Olympics cost in the vicinity of an unprecedented €1 billion. Athens’ Mayor Dora Bakoyianni commented: “...we are *paying the price for September 11*” (Kennelly & Toohey, 2007, p. 13).

“How attractive can the Games’ staging be nowadays, when the effort to protect against such an unspecified threat and the potentially huge cost of implementing the precautionary principle could stand in the way of its economic viability?”. And what about public domains, such as the dedicated Olympic Park? How to control access? How to locate an obsessed extremist suicide bomber? Will we find ourselves in a post-Orwellian age in order to stop to the threat, whose target are not the Principles of the Olympic Movement, as was the case with the Munich terrorists, but anything that can cause chaos? Could the potentially huge expense of applying the precautionary principle have implications for attracting cities to host the Games in the future? Could attempting to protect against such an amorphous threat diminish the financial feasibility of hosting the event? (Kennelly & Toohey, 2007). These are difficult questions, which, naturally, cannot have a

theoretical answer through the lines of a simple review of the modern problems that the Olympic Movement faces.<sup>62</sup>

As Wassong (2009, p. 19), aptly observes: *"... the appearance of terrorism on the Olympic map has changed the Olympic world. According to Coubertin, one integral criterion for the celebration of the Olympic Games must be a joyful atmosphere. For good reasons, the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympic Games turned into a maximum-security event. The same was almost true for Athens 2004, Turin 2006 and Beijing 2008. The growth in security for athletes and visitors alike is undoubtedly necessary but it has also had the effect of overshadowing some of the joyful and relaxed Olympic spirit. It is regrettable that this Olympic spirit must be an army of security staff, including soldiers, police forces and even spies. For research projects it would be interesting to analyse how the growing fear for terrorist attacks have affected the Olympic Games. It is definitely hard to analyse the problem of the impact of security measures on the development of such an intangible concept as the so-called Olympic Spirit. It would be possible however, to focus on the hard facts and assess how the threat of terrorism and security issues have had an influence of their own on the plans of bidding cities, selection of candidate cities, budget planning for hosting the Olympic Games and implementation of security strategies and measures"*.

### 13. Human Rights and Olympic Movement: Steps forwards...

The issue of human rights repression, in every society and political system and even in everyday interpersonal relations, has been a matter of concern to many philosophers, sociologists and politicians to date, and the protection of these rights is a primary obligation for the operation of every major international organization.

As stated in the IOC's Charter<sup>63</sup>, the goal of modern Olympism, since its birth at the end of the 19th century, has been *"...to place sport at the service of the*

62 For further information, opinions and documentation we suggest: Terrorism and Olympic Games: Richard Pound, Inside the Olympics, A. Guttmann, The Games Must Go On: Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984); J. Hoberman, The Olympic Crisis: Sport, Politics and the Moral Order (New Rochelle: A.D. Caratzas, 1986); Michael Atkinson & Kevin Young: "Terror Games" - Olympika, 2002 Vol. XI, A. Senn, Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games (Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics, 1999); K. Wamsley, "The Global Sport Monopoly: A Synopsis of 20th Century Politics" International Journal, LVII, (3), 2002, pp. 395-410, Millicent Kennelly & Kristine Toohey: Terrorism and the Olympics: 'THE GAMES HAVE GONE ON' Sporting Traditions, 24, (1-2) (November, 2007).

63 Fundamental Principle 2.

*harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity*". At a time when European countries were primarily concerned with how better to equip themselves to pursue their expansionist policies more effectively, Coubertin was attempting to create the conditions and environment for a peaceful, intercultural, coexistence of peoples and individuals by promoting sport through the international character of the Olympic Games. Avoiding recourse to war was his goal and vision, which could only be achieved through the development of an international movement that would respect human dignity and restore those Values and Principles that were the great achievements of Ancient Greece.

On 10 December 1948, the UN adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in response to the *"...barbarous acts which [...] outraged the conscience of mankind during the Second World War. Its adoption recognised human rights to be the foundation for freedom, justice and peace"*.

Just a year later, in 1949, the IOC introduced in its Statutes<sup>64</sup> the basic principle of not allowing discrimination in the Olympic Games on grounds of colour, religion or politics, but 47 years had to pass (1996) before participation in sport was recognized as a "human right"<sup>65</sup> The collapse of apartheid with the development of sport in Africa in the intervening years, together with the fall of communism, certainly played a role in this recognition and were the two events that changed the global political map, paving the way for the IOC and the Olympic Movement to move more rapidly towards autonomy. The approach expressed in the above Universal Declaration was maintained with minor variations in the wording until 2011, when it took its final form as Fundamental Principle 4, appearing in the 2020 edition of the Olympic Charter.<sup>66</sup>

According to Isidoria and Benettonb (2015, p. 689) *"...as sport is both culture and education, as well as a practice affected by them, people's involvement in sport is the indicator of the level of social inclusion and well-being achieved in a given*

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64 Fundamental Principle 1: "The Olympic Games are held every four years and assemble amateurs of all nations in fair and equal competition under conditions which are to be as perfect as possible.

No discrimination is allowed against any country or person on grounds of colour, religion or politics".

65 Fundamental Principle 8: The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practising sport in accordance with his or her needs.

66 Fundamental Principle 4: "The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practising sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play".

*community. ...Sport is a right; this should be the starting point of sport education, which should start from the philosophical assumption affirming that sport is a human activity that sums up in itself all the human rights. This is so because sport is, first of all, body, movement, and play/game. Its nature implies a bodily dimension that is connected with health and well-being, as well as with the biological and psycho-social dimension of every human being".*

The main conclusions that can be drawn from the above evolution of the Fundamental Principles of the Olympic Movement concerning the recognition of the exercise of sport as a human right are:

1. **The goal of Olympism is:** "To place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity".
2. **The practice of sport is a human right.** "Every individual must have the possibility of practicing sport, without discrimination of any kind".
3. **The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Olympic Charter shall be secured** "... without discrimination of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status".

These three Principles are absolute and clear in their meaning and are among the obligations that guide the managers of the Olympic Movement, the core of which is to ensure the right of the "athlete" to enjoy the "freedom of sport" in an environment of political neutrality and operational autonomy. Consequently, the obligation to ensure the non-discriminatory protection of the human right to sport belongs to the IOC and the other recognised sports organisations that make up the Olympic Movement; the subject who enjoys this protection is the "athlete" or, more broadly, the "individual who practices sport".

The above definition should be absolutely clear because it will serve as a basis for the analysis that follows, with its many facets and more than one interpretation. The field of action of the Olympic Movement and especially its most representative manifestation, the Olympic Games, has often been transformed into an arena of political and ideological intervention for the reasons detailed in previous chapters. The Olympic Games has become a field for the exploitation and promotion of ideas, sometimes through the power play and cynical behaviour demonstrated by the political leadership of various States, and sometimes through the projection of messages with a political or ideological content. The first category includes the threats and boycotts during the '60s -'80s; and the second category includes the forms of activism expressed by athletes mainly during the Mexico, Munich, Beijing and Rio Olympics.

All the actions of the second category of exploitation of the Olympic Games for ideological purposes have as their rationale a demand for the Olympic Movement to take a stand against any form of human rights repression, outside the sporting framework, but always by invoking the ultimate purpose of Olympism, which is *“to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity”*.

As argued by Sam Ramsamy, honorary member of the IOC and a great fighter against apartheid in South Africa, (2021, p. 185) *“...The International Olympic Committee (IOC), being fully aware and conscious of human rights issues, it not only continually emphasizes its fundamental principle but also promotes and publicizes its activities in such a way to ensure that all its stakeholders respect and adhere to its policies. The elements of unity in diversity, peace and the respect for human dignity are indelibly embedded in Olympic philosophy. Most issues are the purview of the UN and other government bodies. Sadly, the special interest groups (most times defined as pressure groups) target the IOC because it is a soft option. The Olympic Charter is very clear on the types of action that fall within the mandate of the IOC. But, most importantly, the IOC is fully conscious of all aspects of human rights and intervenes if there is a violation of the Olympic Charter. The dilemma is its interpretation. More so, when a plethora of special interest groups, often with a narrow focus, make excessive demands on the Olympic Movement. Sometimes even governments, largely with political leanings and agendas of one type or another, extend their demands for sanctions on national teams. Individual politicians, often aiming for aggrandizement of some form or another, express their views either in political forums or in the media”*.

But is it a matter of interpretation of the relevant Fundamental Principle of the Charter? Or is the justification put forward each time a conscious intention to include within the framework of this general Principle of Olympism every demand of a group of citizens oppressed by the political leadership of their country, regardless of whether the possibility of free sport by the oppressed is affected or not? Because if we leave aside for the moment the case of South Africa and Rhodesia, where indeed the policy of the regimes that ruled those countries for many years did not allow a category of citizens to exercise their right to free sport, in all other cases the protest demonstrations referred to a more general form of political or social repression of other human rights rather than that of free sport.

In the case of South Africa and Rhodesia, the IOC did what the Fundamental Principles 4, 5 and 6 of its Charter required it to do. It excluded the participation of



athletes from these countries in a series of Olympic Games because of the violation by their regimes of the rights of people of colour and whites to free sport in the same environment. This action by the IOC was a profound blow to the general policy of apartheid, but was however an indirect blow, i.e. through the decision to protect the rights of athletes. Thus, the major argument characterizing the prevailing view with regard to the non-intervention of politics in sport was addressed. The then IOC President, Avery Brundage, was a fervent supporter of this view.

However, if the IOC's intervention in the above cases was effective in condemning a general policy of racial discrimination, the same is not true in a number of other cases which, although not concerned with the protection of the right to practice sport freely, led to forms of activism with demands of great and general moral weight, but not of sporting content.

Quite early on, the IOC had become aware of the intentions behind the projection of political and ideological messages through the biggest sporting and cultural event, the Olympic Games. The extent of the protection of human dignity and respect for diversity was expressed in the Olympic Charter in 1949, through unambiguous reference in the Fundamental Principles that: *"No discrimination is allowed against any country or person on grounds of colour, religion or politics".*<sup>67</sup>

In 1964, a special chapter was introduced in the Charter under the title POLITICAL USE OF SPORT, where it was stated: *"... It considers, however, as dangerous to the Olympic ideals, that, besides the proper development of sports in accordance with the Principles of amateurism, certain tendencies exist, which aim primarily at a national exaltation of the results gained instead of the realization that the sharing of friendly effort and rivalry is the essential aim of the Olympic Games."*<sup>68</sup>

In 1985, the same content reappeared, but without the reference to "amateurism", the then President Samaranch having formally abolished the distinction between amateur and professional athletes, allowing all athletes to participate in the Games.

Two years later, in the 1987 edition of the Charter, Article 53, "PROPAGANDA AND ADVERTISING" appeared for the first time, stipulating that: *"Every kind of demonstration or propaganda, whether political, religious or racial, is forbidden in the Olympic areas,"* which was slightly altered in the 2011 edition: *"No kind of demonstration or political, religious or racial propaganda is permitted in any Olympic sites, venues or other areas".*

<sup>67</sup> Olympic Statutes 1949 – Fundamental Principles I

<sup>68</sup> Olympic Statutes 1964 - Political Use of Sport.

Shortly before the commencement of the 2020 Tokyo Games, Article 50 of the Charter was questioned for its correctness by many human rights scholars, but not by those whose interest is unreserved, i.e. the members of the Olympic Movement. The truth is that the pressure on the tight framework of the political and ideological neutrality of the Olympic Movement, following events in the US with African-American victims, was considerable and resulted in a series of debates and related articles.

In 2020, the cold-blooded murder of George Floyd, a black man in Minneapolis, US, sparked storms of protests around the world. From London to Pretoria, to Sydney, people took to the streets to express the need for police reform and racial equality. Many held signs that read "Black Lives Matter", while others kneeled.<sup>69</sup>

In 2016, the famous "taking a knee" as a reaction against the policy of discrimination used by the US police towards black Americans began to become a slogan in sports against racial oppression when the American football player Colin Kaepernick kneeled during the national anthem before a match. He said he could not stand to show pride in the flag of a country that oppressed black people. Taking a knee has now become common practice in numerous football matches in Europe. The United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) has specified that it is allowing racial and social justice demonstrations that promote historically underrepresented and marginalized groups. Nevertheless, this decision does not apply to the Olympic Games, since the staging and the conditions for the participation of athletes in them are subject to the relevant provisions of the IOC.

The way in which athletes in various team sports have chosen today to protest against policies of discrimination has not taken long to knock on the door of the IOC. A number of athletes and columnists asked the IOC to change the content of the now famous Article 50, in order to give athletes, the opportunity to protest in any way they choose against the political repression of human rights, not only in the US but in every corner of the world. Everyone remembers the silent gesture of Americans Tommie Smith and John Carlos at the 1968 Mexico Games, but at the same time the extent of protection the IOC can provide through its Statutory Structure tends to be forgotten.

In the face of this new threat to Olympic neutrality, the IOC asked its Athletes' Commission members to conduct a broad survey and, after gathering the views of athletes from around the world, to come back with concrete proposals.

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69 <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/06/world/gallery/intl-george-floyd-protests/index.html>

In April 2020, in a press release, the IOC stated that the IOC Executive Board received the full support of the Athletes' Commission for a set of recommendations in regard to Rule 50 of the Olympic Charter, which provides a framework to protect the neutrality of sport and the Olympic Games, which are fully supportive of the freedom of expression.

The recommendations are the result of an extensive qualitative and quantitative consultation process implemented by the IOC Athletes Commission, which started in June 2020 and involved over 3,500 athletes, representing 185 different NOCs and all 41 Olympic sports, ensuring fully gender-equal representation. The consultation was supported by the Continental Associations' Athletes' Commissions and the World Olympians Association.

*"The Athletes Commission's recommendations, after an extensive qualitative and quantitative consultative process, state, inter alia:*

*Increase opportunities for athletes' expression during the Olympic Games.*

*As Olympic athletes, we are passionate about our sports. For each and every one of us that passion continues into everyday of our lives, where we advocate change on issues of great importance to us and our societies. Athletes should not be silent about the issues they care deeply about.*

*Preserve the podium, field of play (FoP) and official ceremonies from any kind of protests and demonstrations, or any acts perceived as such.*

*The majority of participating athletes did not think it is appropriate for athletes to express individual views during the Opening Ceremony, on the podium nor in the field of play. The respondents were most likely to believe it appropriate for athletes to demonstrate or express their individual views in the media, the press conferences and in the mixed zones"* (Ramsamy, 2021, p. 188)

Kirsty Coventry, Chair of the IOC Athletes Commission, said: *"The goal of this wide outreach was to engage with athletes and hear their thoughts on existing and new opportunities to express their views at the Olympic Games, as well as outside Games time. We want to amplify the voices of athletes and find more ways to support the values of the Olympic Games and what sport stands for. This consultation was a very important process for us and is part of the ongoing dialogue with the athlete community. We are delighted that the IOC EB fully supported our proposals."*<sup>70</sup>

The IOC Executive Board has adopted the positions of the Athletes' Commission

<sup>70</sup> <https://olympics.com/ioc/news/ioc-athletes-commission-s-recommendations-on-rule-50-and-athlete-expression-at-the-olympic-games>

and is ready to formulate the new framework of “freedom of expression” for athletes participating in the Olympic Games. This involves maintaining, on the one hand, the Movement’s philosophy of neutrality through the prohibition of political or ideological demonstrations on the podium while on the other hand, taking a few steps back and allowing statements or protests in defence of human rights in areas of media interest and in the mixed zone. These decisions have started to be implemented since the commencement of the 2020 Tokyo Games. It remains to be seen in practice whether these decisions by the IOC will be respected by athletes and officials taking part in the Games. It also remains to be seen how the IOC will react to those who are likely to ignore the above commitments. However, we must acknowledge that in one case of violation of the Principle of non discrimination in sport on ground of politics, ideology and fair play that turned up during the first days of the Tokyo Games, the IOC’s reaction was immediate. When the Algerian Judoka Fethi Nourine refused to face an opponent from Israel, ostentatiously withdrawing from the match, the IOC immediately removed his accreditation and he was expelled from the Olympic Village.

And if the exploitation of the Games to promote ideological or political messages has been dealt with in a satisfactory manner to date, as shown above, a big question mark remains as to the application in practice of the first Fundamental Principle that refers to the goal of Olympism, which is: *“To place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity”*. The problem in the application of this principle is that it does not refer to the protection of the right to free sport alone but affects - without conditions and without reference to specific groups of citizens - a wider set of people who are oppressed in a society. The Principle targets every oppressed group of people and this is precisely the difficulty applying it if, as an International Sports Organisation, in order to achieve this goal you have to get involved and clash, directly or indirectly, with the political leadership of a State in order to defend the general good of human dignity. How easy is this when the dominant view is that the Movement should not get involved in politics? And how feasible is it to adopt this noble view without having the means to impose it?

There have been several occasions when the IOC has been called upon to take a stand in cases of human rights threats or violations of general interest. However, the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of a country, if the right to freedom of sport is not affected, has prevented the IOC from intervening in such

significant human rights violations. These include the massacre of students on the sidelines of the 1968 Mexico Games, the repression of Tibetan protests at the 2008 Beijing Games and the violence used against those who participated in protests against the Brazilian government during the 2016 Rio Games.

In contrast to these cases, however, the same Principle helped the IOC to intervene effectively in other cases of human rights repression, using the violation of the right to free sport as an implicit justification. This applied in the cases of South Africa and Rhodesia, the anti-Semitic law of Nazi Germany and a number of cases against the autonomy of sports bodies, detailed below.<sup>71</sup> Of great importance in the evolution of the Olympic Movement's fundamental potential is the case of the IOC's decisive intervention over the homophobic law imposed by the Russian government shortly before the 2014 Sochi Winter Games against all forms of propaganda for freedom of sexual orientation. In June 2013, Russian President, Vladimir Putin, signed into law an anti-LGBT "propaganda" bill. The law uses the pretext of protecting children to ban spreading information about equality, tolerance, and other issues affecting the LGBT community and it demonized LGBT people and activists in the public eye. This has helped spark a surge in harassment and violent attacks against LGBT people, and the IOC raised no concerns about how this could be compatible with a commitment to non-discrimination. The IOC's subsequent intervention and success in securing the non-application of the law in the context of the Olympic Games was welcomed worldwide by the friends of Olympism. Moreover, at the same time, the IOC President accepted the suggestions of Human Rights Watch and other human rights NGOs to make reforms to the Charter such as broadening the content of Fundamental Principle 6 to include sexual orientation among the rights.

According to MacAloon (2015, p. 19): *"... It should be pointed out that 'sexual orientation and gender identity' was reduced to 'sexual orientation' in Agenda 2020's Resolution 14. Was this a mere verbal economy or is it a significant reflection of a regime of clear-cut distinction between 'men's' and 'women's' sports events in the Olympic system which shows no inclination or wish to further complicate matters with transgender sport"*.

However, as Wallechinsky (2020), recalls: *"...When the 2014 Winter Games were held in Russia, there was a great deal of media coverage of the Putin government's passage of an anti-homosexual law. Less known is how the Russian government sanitized the Olympic zones by keeping out anyone they didn't like."*

<sup>71</sup> Chapter 17 : "The Autonomy of the Olympic Movement" p. 168.

*Even if a Russian citizen had purchased tickets to attend the Sochi Games, he or she had to obtain an 'Olympic passport' to enter the area near the Olympics, and these passports were denied to those whom the Putin government considered 'undesirable'".*

However, apart from the above increased inclusivity, which also concerns protection of freedom in sport, the IOC has made another reform, which truly demonstrates the Movement's intention to broaden its interest in general support for human dignity. The Human Rights Watch's proposal that the conditions a country must meet in order to be eligible to bid for the Games there should include an obligation to declare that it recognizes and respects human rights was initially adopted by the IOC, which went on to add the same obligation to those required of the Olympic Games host city, through its inclusion in the Host City Contract.

However, the successful outcome of such a serious innovation in the relations between the IOC and the Host City, which directly reflects the respective State's governance and its policy on human rights, rests on the IOC's willingness to implement the relevant provision. This is because, if it is established during the bidding process for the Games that the government of the State to which the candidate city belongs pursues a policy of human rights repression, it is easy to decide to exclude it from the selection process. However, if such a policy is revealed during the final stages of the Games preparations, how ready would the IOC be to face the possible scenario of withdrawing the Games from the country in question? What is certain, however, is that the days of the Movement not getting involved in politics are well and truly over...

As Bruce Kidd observed during his 2020 lecture at the IOA's Master degree programme: *"...In recent years, the international community has begun to move away from the principle of non-intervention towards the ideas of the humanitarian responsibility to protect. The world is no longer prepared to ignore what happens within nation States, nor let non-governmental organizations like the IOC off the hook. In 2018, the Council of Europe, the non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch and a coalition of sports bodies calling themselves Mega-Sporting Events Platform for Human Rights urged the IOC to make human rights, labour standards and anti-corruption measures central to the staging of the Olympic Games. In 2020, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reported that international sports bodies fail to protect their members' human rights and recommended that 'sporting bodies should commit themselves to protecting and*

respecting internationally recognized human rights”.

The IOC's change of course, towards a more direct implementation of Principle 1 and a direct approach to the issue of the general protection of human rights in its members NOCs, was clearly shown by the unanimous adoption by the IOC Session of the Agenda 2020 proposed by President Bach, where, in Recommendations 11 and 14, the Movement attempts to tackle with determination the phenomenon of disrespect for human dignity.<sup>72</sup>

In particular, on the issue of promoting gender equality, the IOC is trying to increase the participation of women in sporting events by obliging sports organisations to give 30% of management positions to women. This effort by the IOC was made even clearer by the recommendation to National Olympic Committees to put both a man and a woman together as flag bearers of the Olympic delegation parading at the opening ceremony, a decision implemented for the first time with great success at the 2020 Tokyo Games.

Finally, another action of the IOC that could be described as a successful step in the implementation of the Principle of respect for human dignity is the IOC's decision, following the recommendation of its President, to set up an Olympic Refugee Team, which would participate in the Olympic Games under the IOC flag. At the 2016 Rio Games, 10 athletes from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Syria, and South Sudan were included in that team to give visibility to the plight of the world's 80 million refugees and dramatize their rights to dignity and opportunities. This was repeated at the 2020 Tokyo Games with the participation of 29 refugees from 11 countries.

During the announcement of the names of the participants in the Refugee Olympic Team IOC President, Bach, said: “The refugee athletes are an enrichment for all of us in the entire Olympic community. The reasons we created this team still exist. We have more forcibly displaced people in the world right now, and therefore it went without saying that we wanted to create an IOC Refugee Olympic Team for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics”.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Agenda 2020: Recommendation 11 “Foster gender equality”.

1. The IOC to work with the International Federations to achieve 50% female participation in the Olympic Games and to stimulate women's participation and involvement on sport by creating more participation opportunities at the Olympic Games. Recommendation 14 “Strengthen the 6th Fundamental Principle of Olympism”. The IOC to include non-discrimination on sexual orientation in the 6th Fundamental Principle of Olympism.

<sup>73</sup> <https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/News/2018/02/opening-ceremony/President-speech-PyeongChang-2018-Opening-Ceremony.pdf>

## 14. The Olympic Movement as a soft power in the context of international diplomacy

On 7 February 2019, on the one-year anniversary of the opening of the PyeongChang Winter Games, IOC President Bach sent a warm message stating: *"...the Olympic Winter Games PyeongChang 2018 were a success story in so many respects. From the sporting achievements and the athletes' experience to the excellent organisation, these Games opened new horizons in more ways than anyone could have imagined. The best expression of this was the joint march of the athletes of the National Olympic Committees of the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at the Opening Ceremony. They entered the Olympic Stadium as one team, united behind one flag, the Korean unification flag. With these powerful symbols in PyeongChang, we saw how the Olympic Games can open the way to dialogue, how the Olympic Values can open the way to a more peaceful future. It is our hope that this door to a more peaceful future on the Korean peninsula will remain open. The IOC is committed to continuing to support the on-going political peace talks on the Korean peninsula through sport. Sport must continue to build bridges and show what it can do to bring people together"*.<sup>74</sup>

One of the most important rulings of the Olympic Charter is presented through the Fundamental Principle 5, according to which: *"Recognising that sport occurs within the framework of society, sports organisations within the Olympic Movement shall apply political neutrality. They have the rights and obligations of autonomy, which include freely establishing and controlling the rules of sport, determining the structure and governance of their organisations, enjoying the right of elections free from any outside influence and the responsibility for ensuring that Principles of good governance be applied"*.

The importance of the above Principle is not limited to the recognition of the obligation to respect the neutrality that should be enjoyed by sports institutions in general, but also indirectly extends to the possibility that enables them to emerge as a diplomatic force that can intervene in specific cases in a political scene.

According to Håvard Moksleiv Nygård (2013, abstract) of the Peace Research Institute of Oslo, whose approach on the matter I find exceptional: *"Soft power is the power to persuade whereby one actor in a non-coercive manner convinces another to want the same things he/she wants. Sport can be used as tool of soft power both internationally and domestically. Peacebuilding and nation-building*

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74 Minutes of the 54th International Session for Young Participants, 2014.



*can be achieved through four mechanisms of sport diplomacy and politics: image-building; building a platform for dialogue; trust building; and reconciliation, integration and anti-racism. These mechanisms are not deterministically controllable and can have unintended consequences. On the one hand, sporting events can be used as a means of building trust between adversaries".* Based on the above rationale, we could distinguish the soft power mechanisms as follows:

### **Building the appropriate image**

The Olympic Movement, through its long journey and its roots, has built a strong profile and is now the most recognisable brand worldwide. Hosting mega sporting events signals that a country has a special presence on the world sport stage and bestows on the host the world's full attention for many days. Organising countries use the event as a means to mobilise economic forces and human resources in a very short period of time, which under normal conditions would be next to impossible. As well as the Head of States and the governments of the organizing Olympic Games country, many other people are proud of hosting such event.

### **Building a platform for dialogue**

As has been realised by a series of events in the past, sport is able to create a suitable platform, which helps sustain and develop actions capable of surmounting obstacles, often created by dogmatic stereotypes. In eras where strained relations between political superpowers created a veil of concern in international intergovernmental relations, sports and the Games offered fertile ground for convergence talks, opening communication channels that no other event could have created. While mega sport events provide good venues for multilateral meetings, sometimes head of States need an event that is specifically designed to resolve issues between two States. Ping-pong diplomacy case was a great example of using a sport event to initiate political dialog between two countries (Trunkos & Heer, 2017).

### **Cultivating a climate of trust**

Sport can also be utilised to create a climate of trust, on which peace can be built. For this to be the case, a specific sports event should, through repetition, exert an influence as an appropriate space for trust between the participants, enabling obstacles which would otherwise be impossible to surmount be set aside. During the Games, teams and delegations' live side-by-side in the same residential space, e.g. the Olympic Village, offering a safe environment for the cross-cultural

exchange of ideas. This is what President Bach noted, in his speech delivered at the opening ceremony of the 54th International Session for Young Participants, on the hill of Pnyx: *"...the Games prove that people from different backgrounds, cultures, religions and traditions can come together in harmony. There is no better example of this than the Olympic Village. The Olympic Village embodies the concept of unity in diversity. From my own experience as an Olympian, it is one of the most moving and memorable aspects of participating in the Games. It is where the Olympic Spirit lives"*.<sup>75</sup>

### **Through the process of reconciliation, integration and anti-racism**

The fourth mechanism, which, as Nygård notes, may function in the direction of peace building is when sport is used to restore orderly social co-existence within a country through reconciliation, integration and anti-racism. Sport is a cultural institution, which can be found on the boundary between politics and civil society. In divided societies, discrimination, religious hatred and violence were perpetrated through sport, but it has also been a very effective tool for resolving conflicts, reconciliation and peace building. In South Africa, for example, rugby was closely linked to the ruling class of whites and was considered to be a symbol of apartheid. That is why Mandela's objective in organising the Rugby World Cup was, mainly, to support reconciliation and to integrate all South-Africans. Similarly, recently, the purely political decision reached by the IOC to create a separate team, in which political migrants from various countries could participate, constitutes a significant initiative in the peace building effort.

As has been discussed in previous chapters, at the dawn of the 20th century and following the era of Coubertin with his romantic approach to amateurism, sport appeared as a *"social conquest"* of the industrial age. Until that point, it had depended on private initiative and the so-called *"upper class"*, with its preoccupation with amateurism, without women and nationalist minorities, it comprised, as we presently analyse it, a game for the *"few"*. As it was shaped at that time, the Olympic Movement was of no serious interest to politics. The idea that the Movement could play a decisive role on an international political level in the future was not visible, even though its strength had started to be tested domestically by many States.

Although the Olympic Movement desperately tried to stay away from politics, in reality it never achieved this goal. However, it is important to note that, in this

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75 54th International Session for Young Participants 2014 - Proceedings 2015 p.39

respect, some theorists and experts have expressed opposing views.

The Olympic Movement, having finally cast off the constraints imposed by political expediency, does not seek to play a transcendental and decisive role on the international political stage! It simply has the ability to impose its own independence in a certain manner by establishing its autonomy, resulting in the relationship gradually being reversed. It seems the Olympic Movement has acquired the dynamics that it has sought since its creation, to gradually become a respected soft political power in the realm of international politics. This new direction of the Olympic Movement brought it to threshold of the UN, where its soft power was recognised.

According to Pere Miro, the actual Deputy Director of the IOC (2021, p. 270) “... the Olympic Movement has first a clear mandate, which is to use sport to create a better world. Second, we have a very important principle of no discrimination: everyone in the world is included. Third, we have a unique position of neutrality with the necessary autonomy; and fourth, we have a structure covering the whole world. At the end, we have no excuses. We must act in favour of a better world and improve relations among countries, communities and individuals, and this is what the IOC and the whole Olympic Movement have done for many years”.

During the 125 years of its existence there have been more than a few times when the IOC made use of soft power, in the most effective way. Pere Miro throughout his involvement in the IOC administration, witnessed a number of cases, in which the supreme authority proved in practice its power to intervene as a soft power in political issues, trying to bridge differences of political nature. As he characteristically observes (Miro, 2021, p. 270) “The structure of the Olympic Movement is key for developing sports diplomacy, as it gives the capacity to operate in developing the aforementioned Olympic Values and bringing people together.”

Juan Antonio Samaranch, an avid diplomat himself, when elected as IOC President, in 1980, in Moscow, having been a member for many years, faced two serious boycotts (Moscow and Los Angeles), trying also, in every way, to avoid an additional one in the Seoul Games. As he mentions in his autobiography (2002, p. 218): “I don’t deny that the ghost of boycott was hanging over our heads (...). We worked really hard in order to halt its dynamic. I have to confess that the statement of the current President of Eastern Germany, Honecker, has helped us a lot. The communist leader clearly expressed himself in favour of the People’s Republic of Germany participation in the Games, regardless of the USSR position (...). Soon enough I was assured that North Korea could not jointly organize with us any sports event. For this reason, I decided to bluff, making a move of risk control: The IOC

would show a growing interest in the conduct of important games in North Korea. In the end, as I expected, North Korea did not accept to organize any game, since the country's financial state as well as its organizational capabilities did not allow it and there was no guarantee for success. In this way, we persuaded also USSR that the North Koreans themselves had declined our offer".

The act of soft power on the part of the IOC and Samaranch was also repeated in Sarajevo, when he decided to visit, during the 1994 Lillehammer Winter Olympic Games. "Sarajevo was a very special city for the Olympic Movement, as it hosted the 1984 Olympic Winter Games", Pere Miro remembers (2021, p. 271) "...President Samaranch took a flight to Sarajevo in the middle of the Olympic Winter Games Lillehammer 1994, to support through his presence the hope to solve the conflict by re-building the memories of Sarajevo's citizens of a recent peaceful past. He pledged that the IOC would rebuild the Zetra Sports Hall after the war. Zetra was used for the Closing Ceremony of the Olympic Winter Games Sarajevo 1984. He kept his promise, and the rebuilt venue is now named after Juan Antonio Samaranch. But, more than that, his intention was to re-birth the national sports structure and create an NOC".

One of the recent IOC actions in the political diplomatic field was the recognition of the NOC of Kosovo, in 2014, even though it had not been recognized by UN. A similar case was the recognition of the NOC of Eastern Germany in 1968 before its official recognition by the UN, which was finally realized a few years later.

Although the discussions between the IOC and the UN had started and developed many years before, the Olympic Movement publicly emphasised this relationship for the first time at the Olympic Congress in Copenhagen (2009). In his opening speech, the then IOC President, Jacques Rogge, noted how different the world, was today compared to the world in which Pierre de Coubertin lived and how the world needs, at the beginning of the 21st century, the Olympic Values and the services offered by the Olympic Movement. As he characteristically put it, "... we exist to serve society and to put sport at the service of humanity. We cannot change the world on our own, but we can contribute to its improvement".<sup>76</sup>

As Wassong observes (2010, p. 450): "...the partnership with the UN can be considered symbolic. The UN flag is hoisted at the Olympic Stadium and Olympic Village by the Nagano Winter Games in 1998. Cooperation agreements between the UN agencies (including UNESCO, UNICEF, UNEP and UN Habitat)

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<sup>76</sup> [https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document Library/OlympicOrg/IOC/Congresses/XIII-Olympic-Congress-Copenhagen-2009](https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/IOC/Congresses/XIII-Olympic-Congress-Copenhagen-2009)

*and the Olympic organisations have been concluded since the '80s, and the Olympic Movement has agreed to the IOC commitment on the UN Millennium Development Goals".*

The UN observer status was granted to the IOC in October 2009 and the first UN Counter-Terrorism Forum was held in Lausanne, in May 2010. After Rogge's introductory address at the opening ceremony of the Olympic Congress, in Copenhagen, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, addressing the participants, stressed the power of sport as a vehicle for global humanitarian aid and hope: *"... sport is everywhere in the world. I travelled to countries plunged into poverty, I saw societies struggling to survive, places devastated by the war, where all hope seemed to have been lost. And all of a sudden, a ball made of plastic bags or newspapers appears. Dreams and hopes come back, all thanks to sports".*<sup>77</sup>

During his speech, Ban Ki-moon referred to his Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace, Wilfried Lemke. For him, sport is a global language that brings people together and builds bridges. Lemke's main responsibility was to promote sport as a means of development and peace. The UN position on Olympic Peace, both within its system and externally, is to encourage collaboration and partnerships in this field. Mr Ban Ki-moon Stated that the UN attaches great value to the IOC's Peace Initiatives, which it considers to be an outstanding example in the pursuit of the Olympic Peace idea.

It is a fact that, despite the successive interventions of politics in sporting events, it can be seen, from the middle of the last century how positive the role of the Olympic Movement could be in political affairs when, with a series of realistic actions by the IOC addressed to governments and NOCs, another side of the Olympic Movement was highlighted.

The recommencing of peace talks between South and North Korea is the latest in a series of diplomatic actions undertaken by the Olympic Movement on the international stage, which over time has proven the soft political power of Olympism, contributing successfully to resolving political disputes.

In many cases, some of which are analysed in previous chapters, the intervention of the IOC in political events was characterised as particularly positive and effective, conferring on the Institution the role, both critical and as essential, of dominant player on the international political scene. The most recent and most important case

<sup>77</sup> [https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/IOC/Congresses/XIII-Olympic-Congress-Copenhagen-2009/Overview/EN-XIII-Olympic-Congress-Ki-Moon-Ban.pdf#\\_ga=2.75073874.1967222961.1571136969-1441852936.1557392600](https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/IOC/Congresses/XIII-Olympic-Congress-Copenhagen-2009/Overview/EN-XIII-Olympic-Congress-Ki-Moon-Ban.pdf#_ga=2.75073874.1967222961.1571136969-1441852936.1557392600)

for the IOC to operate as a “*soft political power*” on the international political scene to date, is that of resuming, after many years, diplomatic negotiations between South and North Korea on the occasion of the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Games, an initiative that is a vibrant example of the Olympic Movement’s contribution to international peace.

Despite a strong will to make the Olympic Games a powerful tool to support societal evolution, the Olympic Movement has developed against a backdrop of significant political, social, technological and economic change: two World Wars, the Cold War, the rise of new international powers, the emergence of new independent States, an increase in religious and ethnic conflicts, and more.

To face these changes, and in the name of the principle of universality of the Olympic Movement, the IOC has been the leader of multiple diplomatic initiatives, using the power of sport to promote understanding and collaboration. Some of the most prominent examples of this have been: the final agreement regarding the inclusion of both the Chinese and the Chinese Taipei Olympic Committees, in 1981; the active support for the creation of the Bosnian NOC after the war in Yugoslavia (the NOC’s statutes, contrary to usual practice, state that representatives of the three main communities take turns to cover the presidency during each term of office); promoting collaboration between countries with difficult diplomatic relations (South Korea and North Korea, Israel and Palestine, etc.); support for the reconstruction of the Iraqi NOC after the Iraq War, in 2003.<sup>78</sup>

No less important is the decision of the IOC to promote solidarity with political refugees, by allowing them to participate in the Games as a separate group under the IOC flag, which is another strong demonstration of the dynamic the Olympic Movement has developed in our days, and which is an even more substantial demonstration of the “*soft power*” of political intervention in international affairs. The decision on the refugees’ participation under the IOC flag may have also revealed, even more clearly, the modern, different approach of the Olympic Movement to burning political issues; a resolute response, that was reluctant to manifest itself in the past.

It was at the 46th IOC Session, in Oslo, in 1952, that the issue of the participation at the Helsinki Games of political refugees from the Eastern bloc countries, was first raised.<sup>79</sup> The President of the IOC, Edstrom, put the request submitted to the Executive Board for discussion at the General Assembly, while noting that among the ref-

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78 <https://library.olympics.com/Default/olympic-movement-diplomacy.aspx>

79 Minutes of the 46th IOC Session, 1952, Oslo.

ugees were many athletes who had participated in previous Games. If one considers that the IOC had recognised the Olympic Committee of the Soviet Union only a year earlier, the challenge was great. The political tension that had emerged in the eastern countries that were part of the Soviet sphere of influence created a highly toxic environment, in which the IOC had to decide whether or not to accept the request.

During the meeting, the views of those who were opposed to the acceptance of the request prevailed; with the most influential contribution coming from von Frenckell, the Finnish delegate, who, after noting that the request of the refugee organisation had been submitted far too late for the Helsinki Games, which were to start soon, supported the overall rejection of the request, adding that at the next Games in Melbourne the exiles would be too old to compete !!!<sup>80</sup>

That same year, just before the opening of the Helsinki Games, at the 47th IOC Session, the issue of political refugees was again raised, with the appearance at the session of Thomas Marffy-Mantuano, representative of the Union of Free Eastern European Sportsmen (UFEES), based in New York. The Hungarian noble exile again supported the request, but to no avail, suggesting even that the refugee group should parade at the opening of the Games under the flag of either the IOC, Switzerland or Greece.

It was the last meeting under the Presidency of the Swede Edstrom, since on the same day the American Brundage had been elected new President of the IOC. The outgoing President, after "conveying his sympathy" to the exiles, announced the rejection of the request by summary proceedings.<sup>81</sup>

Much can be said about this IOC decision. It is certain, however, that the international political situation at that time, with the sports forces of the Eastern countries gradually rising and the inability of the IOC to play an important role in political events, and the Presidency of the ultra-conservative Brundage, whose doctrine was that sport should stay far away from politics, left no room for decisive initiatives likely to complicate matters.

The IOC's decision to foster solidarity towards political refugees, with the participation of a separate team in the Olympic Games under its flag was equally important and constitutes clear proof of the Olympic Movement's potential to constitute

80 Minutes of the 46th IOC Session, 1952, Oslo "Mr von Frenckell, au sujet de la question des réfugiés, pense qu'il est trop tard pour s'en occuper avant les Jeux d'Helsinki, et pour 1956 cela n'aura aucune valeur car ces athlètes seront trop vieux..." (Mr von Frenckell, concerning the refugee issue, believes that it is too late to deal with them prior to the Helsinki Game and, by 1956, they would be too old to compete).

81 Minutes of the 47th IOC Session, 1952, Helsinki.

once more a key soft power for political intervention in international developments. Perhaps this decision to have refugees participate in the Games under the IOC flag reveals more clearly what a modern, different approach the Olympic Movement has to hot political issues; a decisive approach that it would have hesitated to display in the past.

The IOC's change in the last 20 years, culminating in President Bach's significant initiative in the Korean Peninsula case, has shown how much sport and the Olympic Movement can contribute to the consolidation of peace in difficult regions of the world.

Speaking at the UN General Assembly, in New York, in November 2013, the IOC President stressed the need for autonomy in the structure and functioning of sport: *"Sport is truly the only area of human existence that has achieved universal law. Politics must respect this sporting autonomy; the excellent relations between the UN and the IOC can, in this respect, serve as an example for relations at national level between the National Olympic Committees and the national governments. Within this partnership with governments, sport must always remain politically neutral"*.<sup>82</sup>



*IOC President Dr. Thomas Bach at the UN General Assembly: The Olympic Movement at the heart of the international political diplomacy.*

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.olympic.org/news/historic-milestone-united-nations-recognises-autonomy-of-sport>



During the G20 Summit, in Osaka, on 29 June 2019, President Bach addressed the 20 world leaders of the participating States and with the confidence that global recognition of the importance of sports in the communication between political powers bestows, stated: *"...The power of the Olympic Games is their universality. {...} The Olympic athletes are the best examples of this. Their performance creates the magic of the Olympic Games. Their amazing achievements, their effort, excellence, emotions, joy, tears – these are the Olympic Games. {...} There is no discrimination, everyone respects the same rules, we are all equal. In this way, the Olympic athletes are sending an important message to the world. Yes, it is possible to compete with each other, even for the highest prize, but to live together peacefully. In our fragile world we are living in today, such symbols of the unity of humanity in all our diversity give us hope for a better future".." He reassured the G20 leaders: "To make this possible, we need solidarity. {...} We can accomplish this mission only if we stay out of any political dispute. This means we have to be politically neutral. But this is not enough. We depend on your, the world leaders', support for our mission and our neutrality."*<sup>83</sup>

## 15. The IOC as an equal interlocutor with UN and EU

The steady development of the Olympic Movement and its ever-increasing influence on local societies, especially during the realistic period of Samaranch, did not leave the political leaders and the UN indifferent. Recognition by the UN of the dynamic of sport and its outreach to youth, gave rise to the belief that it was the best peaceful means for its reintegration into a peaceful environment.

All three former UN Secretaries-General, Boutros-Boutros-Ghali, Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-moon, not only recognised the importance of sport in shaping a peaceful society, but gradually developed a closer relationship with the IOC.

As early as 1993, the then President of the IOC, Samaranch, had taken the initiative to establish contacts with the UN and, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the creation of the Olympic Movement, called for a decision by the UN General Assembly to name 1994 as the "International Year of Sport" and for a second decision requiring the respect for the International Olympic Truce.

The first occasion on which the UN seriously considered that Olympism could contribute to maintaining the Peace was in 1994, when UN Secretary General Kofi

<sup>83</sup> <https://olympics.com/ioc/news/ioc-President-emphasises-role-of-the-olympic-games-to-unite-the-world-at-g20-summit-in-osaka/>

Annan invited the Ministers of Sport of the Member States of the Organisation to participate in a broad discussion on the topic of "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic Ideal". IOC President Samaranch was invited to this assembly and his presence was instrumental in making headway in the discussions.

One year later, the Secretary-General literally opened the door of the international organisation to the IOC with the historic invitation to Samaranch to speak before the UN General Assembly, in November 1995.



*J. A. Samaranch: Politics and sports should live together by establishing a general framework of mutual respect*

IOC President Samaranch addressed the UN General Assembly and started his speech with the following words: *"...the UN Organization was conceived essentially to improve relations between States and to better the lives of individuals through the establishment of international peace and security, through cooperation and economic and social development and through respect for fundamental human rights. On reflection, nothing in this threefold objective can be said to counter the ideals that inspired the founders of the International Olympic Committee..."*<sup>84</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Samaranch at the UN, Olympic Review XXV, (1995).

It was a historic day, as it was the first time that the IOC had made an appearance and addressed this global political organisation, opening a dialogue that would continue in the following years.

Amongst the speakers were three Olympic champions: Guy Drut, French Minister of State for Youth and Sport; Lia Manoliu, President of the Romanian NOC; and the American gymnast Bart Connor, and the IOC members: Prince Albert of Monaco and Ambassador Alpha Ibrahima Diallo of Guinea. All spoke as representatives of their country, as did the Presidents of the NOCs of Azerbaijan, Maguiatdin Allakhverdiev, and Latvia, Vilnis Baltins. On the following day (48th Session, on 25th October 1993) the draft resolution, co-sponsored by 161 Member States, an absolute record in the history of the UN, was adopted unanimously.

The significance of the UN, the greatest international organisation, accepting proposals made by an organisation that is not made up of States, such as the IOC, was without a doubt a great success of the Olympic Movement. It wouldn't be overstating the case to underline that the recognition of the role of the Movement in maintaining peace in the framework of globalisation, by a political organisation, was the cornerstone of abandoning any attempt at a boycott from that point onwards. After the fall of the Berlin wall and all that entailed, the environment was ready for such a coexistence of politics and the Olympic Movement. Since then, the IOC has been a regular interlocutor of the UN and pushes governments, through joint peace programmes, to follow its own paths of political behaviour rather than the other way round. Most importantly, the UN's recognition of the contribution made sport and the IOC's momentum to the search for peace, which began with Boutros Boutros-Ghali, did not stop after his departure, but was continued by his successors, with greater intensity and determination, also taking into account that the Principles and Values of Olympism were accepted by the whole world.

According to Beacom (2000, p. 15): *"...The revival of the notion of the Olympic Truce is of particular significance in relation to the language of the Olympic Movement. The first project was launched in 1992, following the break-up of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The stated objective was to defend the interests of the athletes, protect the Olympic Games and consolidate the unity of the Olympic Movement. The potential conflict with UN Security Council Resolution 757 of 1992, in which sport was included for the first time as a recognised element within sanctions policy, became apparent: a compromise was finally reached, and the UN Security Council Sanctions Committee accepted the IOC's proposal that the athletes of Yugoslavia be allowed to participate in the Barcelona Games as individuals"*.

The UN has recognised the potential of sport to address issues ranging from children's right to play to the use of sport to promote peace. In 2003, and with the full support of Secretary General Kofi Annan, the UN commissioned and gave approval to a major report: "Sport for Development and Peace: Towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals". The report led to a General Assembly resolution and to the subsequent declaration of 2005 as the International Year for Sport and Physical Education. It is too early to determine whether this and related initiatives will have positive or enduring effects. (Jackson & Haigh, 2008).

In 2009, the IOC accepted an invitation to attend the UN General Assembly as an observer. It was the first time that an international sports organisation enjoyed the honour of being selected as a partner with the world transnational organisation. For the first time, the official voice of world sport would henceforth be able to present and discuss the issues of the world sport movement on equal terms with government representatives of the UN Member States.

The IOC and the UN had become inseparable partners and as Kofi Annan, its next Secretary General, stated: *"... Olympic Ideals are also UN' Ideals: tolerance, equality, fair play and, most of all, peace. Together, the Olympics and the UN can be a winning team. But the contest will not be won easily. Just as athletes strive for world records, so must we strive for world peace"* (Briggs, McCarthy & Zorbas, 2004, p 17).

In March 2019, President Bach presented Colombia's Alberto Moreno to the UN Secretary General, as the new IOC representative for the position of new permanent observer, in the place of Mario Pescante from Italy, who left because of the age limit. In his address, the IOC President emphasised that the IOC represents the same values as those advocated by the UN.

Shortly before Samaranch's initiative, in 1989, another initiative had been undertaken on a European level by Rogge, then President of the European Olympic Committees, for the purpose of launching a dialogue between this sporting organisation and the European Union (EU). This was another effective step in the direction of establishing a dialogue between the Olympic Movement and politics. The Rogge initiative was extremely successful. The European NOCs created a liaison office with the EU in Brussels, made up of representatives of the IOC, NOCs, and 12 International Olympic Federations and with the aid of a lobbying firm, this liaison office follows the activities of the EU Member States, informs its members of political plans and studies adaptation and contact strategies for the sports world vis-à-vis European legislation.



*Dr Jacques Rogge: The pioneer of the International Olympic Committee and the European Union dialogue.*

The similarity between the values and aims of Olympism and the EU is something that has become clear over the years from events. In concrete terms, it is formally outlined in the relevant founding and organisational texts. For example, the expressions "human dignity", "peace", and "non-discrimination" are to be found in the Treaty of the EU, expressing the Values of the EU, and in the "Fundamental Principles of Olympism" as stated in the Olympic Charter. Likewise, the shared aims of Olympism and the EU include, inter alia, the defence of the human rights, the promotion of "solidarity" and "sustainable development".

Alexandre Miguel Mestre, (2010, p. 1) in an article referring to these common values between Olympism and the EU, points out that: "... the overall approach of Olympic Values by all EU institutions has been particularly positive. This is largely due to the attitude of Commissioner Viviane Reding throughout her term of office in the EU, supporting that the Games are the most appropriate means of promoting solidarity and unity among the peoples of Europe. {...} The EU Council of Ministers also stressed the need to promote the moral values of sport and the Olympic ideals, in particular "friendship and fraternity among peoples", ideals shared by the European project". Finally, the European Parliament has repeatedly stated that the Olympic Ideal should be regarded as an integral part of European sports traditions

*and proposed that 1992 be declared the "Olympic Year", a proposal which was unanimously adopted by the EU members. Such was the European Parliament's belief in the identity of values between Olympism and the EU, that it proposed that athletes from Europe should use a common flag as symbol of their joint participation in the Games! They even suggested a flag with the famous European circle of stars and a combination of European colours! The Parliament also proposed to set up a common European group. Fortunately, both proposals were rejected".*

The wider political interests of the European representatives could not resist the temptation to exploit the rapid rise of the Olympic Movement as an undisputed, new, soft power on the international stage.

Thanks to the activities of the liaison office representing the interests of the sports world, and the support of the EU departments, contacts have improved considerably, and have become extremely positive.

## **16. The International Olympic Truce: From theory to practice**

The power of the Olympic Movement – now internationally regarded as a *"soft political power"* – does not appear only in the above successful direct political interventions. It also appears indirectly through invoking and applying the ancient Greek concept of *"Truce"* in modern international relations.

Going back in history to the time of the Games' revival, we see clearly that the concept of *"Olympic Truce"*, as perceived by the ancient Greeks, but also by its current supporters, had not duly concerned Coubertin. *"Although his devotion to the ancient Games was unwavering, as well as to their philosophy, his only references to this "Truce" are made in texts of his speeches during his visits to Greece"* (Muller, 2000, p. 251).

His only reference to the concept of *"truce"* in modern times is made in his famous and historic disquisition on 4 August 1935, entitled: *"The Philosophical Foundations of Modern Olympism"* on Swiss Radio (Muller, 2000). But even there, his reference to the *"truce"* as an integral part of Olympism is used metaphorically to highlight its importance in human relations in an effort to suppress the passions among spectators of a match, urging them to applaud the efforts of all athletes and not just those who express their national feelings.<sup>85</sup> And he goes on to associate the concept of *"Truce"* with a metaphysical approach, *"honouring*

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<sup>85</sup> *"A truce must be called regarding exclusively nationalistic feelings, which must be put on temporary leave, so to speak".*

*the successful arrival of the (new) human generations".<sup>86</sup>*

No hint of a truce in military operations! Not even an attempt to parallel the temporary cessation of hostilities due to the Games! Of course, no one can dispute Coubertin's passion for peace, but it is strange that he did not attach any importance to the concept of truce. Professor Konstantinos Georgiadis, Honorary Dean of the IOA, referring to Coubertin, (2009, p. 51), writes: "... we can identify four fundamental beliefs that inspired Coubertin and his followers who support the theory of "peace through sport": (a) sport strengthens or contributes to social peace through cooperation among generations, social classes, genders and sciences; (b) sporting events contribute to the idea of respect for the homeland, the exchange of ideas between countries, international meetings, the common celebration, reconciliation and not assimilation of people; (c) is there a balance between love of country and love of humanity? International meetings in the context of the Olympic Movement will facilitate mutual respect for common rules, the development of a peaceful predisposition as a means of promoting social justice, and (d) from the earliest days, the concept of reconciliation through sport has been linked to education, human rights, human dignity, and the improvement of human beings through their own efforts".

Coubertin's non-straightforward approach to the concept of truce can be justified by his passion for world peace, which is sought at the end of the road in the cessation of conflicts. The President of the International Olympic Academy, Isidoros Kouvelos, points out in his preface to "Olympic Truce: Sport as a Platform for Peace" (2009, p. 13): "... The rich variety of concepts included in the modern Olympic Movement of Baron Pierre de Coubertin, is the consequence of the high sports and educational values it contains. One of them is the Olympic Truce. For this reason, we must all join forces and implement it, at least during the Games. We all realise that this is difficult in practice, and may even seem utopian. Nevertheless, even if we fail to achieve the Olympic Truce in practice, we will have inspired the new generations with one of the most important points of the revival's vision, the one that identifies "sport with peace".

The revival of the concept of Olympic Truce is particularly important in relation to the language and objectives of the Olympic Movement. Richard Gwyn, a well-known Canadian commentator on international relations, stressed on Canadian

86 "The idea of the "truce" is another element of Olympism. It is closely related to the notion of "rhythm". The Olympic Games must be held on a strictly astronomical rhythm, because they are the quadrennial celebration of the human springtime, honoring the successive arrival of human generations".

television that: "...modern countries do not wage war during the Olympic Games" (Morse, 2003, p. 10).

The IOC recognition of the UN as an official interlocutor provided Samaranch with the potentiality to pursue the restoration of the idea of Olympic Truce. Due to the persistence of this great leader of the Olympic Movement, the IOC managed to secure the UN Resolution, which requested the pause of hostilities during the Olympic Games.

In 1992, J.A. Samaranch, as the IOC President, restored the symbolism of the International Olympic Truce, asking all its members to respect its content, a fact that has been repeated, in every organization of the Games since then. Even if this is typically considered the first effort to revive the concept of the modern Olympic Truce, it has been claimed that the first such attempt in the modern era, took place in 1952, when in the official report of the 1952 Helsinki Games, the Truce is cited by the Organizing Committee, with an analysis of its content. Right afterwards, in 1954, in Athens, on the occasion of the IOC anniversary, the President of that time, Avery Brundage, refers to the importance of Olympic Truce. In 1956, the IOC is obliged to invoke the concept of Truce officially, in order for the Hungarian athletes to be allowed to take part in the Melbourne Games, after the Soviet Union's intervention in their country. Therefore, it can be claimed that this might be the first time that the IOC invokes the modern form of the Olympic Ekecheiria (Masumoto, 2008).

As Wassong (2021, p. 278) observes: *"The relationship between the IOC and UN has become stronger since 1992. Beginning in earnest on the eve of the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games and tied to the disintegration of former Yugoslavia and the related armed conflicts in 1991. The UN Security Council established a Sanctions Committee against Yugoslavia in 1991. The IOC opted for an involvement in this political issue when the Security Council released resolution No. 757 in 1992, in which sport was mentioned as a component of the sanctions.<sup>87</sup> In order to avoid making the Olympic athletes from Yugoslavia the victims of these sanctions, and to protect the Olympic Games as well as the unity of the Olympic Movement, the IOC asserted its independence.<sup>88</sup> After negotiations between the IOC and the UN, the Security Council "approved the IOC's proposal to allow athletes from Yugoslavia*

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87 Loland, S. (1995). Coubertin's Ideology of Olympism from the Perspective of the History of Ideas. In: *Olympika. The International Journal of Olympic Studies*, IV, 65.

88 Wassong, S. (2010). The UN Attitude to Olympic Peace. In: Barney, R.K., Forsyth, J., & Heine, M.K. (Eds.): *Rethinking Matters Olympic: Investigations into the Socio- Cultural Study of the Modern Olympic Movement*. 10th International Symposium for Olympic Research. London, On., 453.



to participate on an individual basis".<sup>89</sup> Motivated by this development, the IOC decided at its 99th Session, held in Barcelona, from 21st to 23rd July 1992, to launch the following appeal for the observance of the Olympic Truce. The appeal called on all States (heads of State, governments and assemblies), national and international organizations to affirm that:

"1. During the period from 7th day before the opening of the Olympic Games until the 7th day after the end of these Games, the Olympic Truce shall be observed;

2. During the Olympic Games dedicated, as in Ancient Greece, to the spirit of brotherhood and understanding between peoples, all initiatives shall be taken and all group or individual efforts made to begin and continue to achieve by peaceful means the settlement of conflicts, whether or not of an international nature, with a view to establishing peace;

3. During the period, all armed conflicts, and any acts related to, inspired by or akin to such conflicts, shall cease, whatever the reason, cause or means of preparation thereof."<sup>90</sup>

At the opening ceremony of the Games of the XXVth Olympiad in Barcelona, independent athletes from Yugoslavia paraded in a uniform bearing the Olympic rings. Through this the IOC stressed the political independence of the Olympic Movement.

*"...The revival of the notion of the Olympic truce is of particular significance in relation to the language of the Olympic Movement"* (Beacom, 2000, p. 15).

A year after Samaranch's intervention in the UN Plenary Session, where he reported on the idea of Olympic Truce for the first time in the history of a political organization, he took advantage of the warm approval given and decided to submit a form requesting the issuance of a relevant Resolution, which would recognize the importance of Truce in the modern era. The IOC's request was easily accepted by the international organization, which decided to include this request in the agenda of the 48th Session of the General Assembly, in 1993. The Session unanimously adopted a Resolution, which was signed by 121 members, on the adherence to the Olympic Truce on the occasion of the celebration of the IOC's centenary. The 1993 Resolution (A/RES/48/11), in favor of the Olympic Truce is considered to be a landmark in the history of Olympism (Briggs, 2004). It is very important to mention that the UN General Assembly's Resolutions supporting the Truce have been signed by most of the State-members, in comparison to other Resolutions in the history of the institution.

<sup>89</sup> Kidane, F. (1998). The Olympic Truce. In: Olympic Review XXVI, 5.

<sup>90</sup> IOC quoted in Wassong (2010). The UN Attitude to Olympic Peace, 453.

Since 1993, the UN General Assembly has repeatedly expressed its support for the IOC by unanimously adopting, every two years, one year before each edition of the Olympic Games, a resolution entitled "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal". Through this symbolic resolution, the UN invites its member States to observe the Olympic Truce individually or collectively, and to seek, in conformity with the goals and Principles of the UN Charter, the peaceful settling of all international conflicts through peaceful and diplomatic means and recognising the importance of the IOC initiatives for human well-being and international understanding.

In 1994, Samaranch experienced the Truce in practice, as the head of the IOC delegation that visited the war-torn city of Sarajevo during the Lillehammer Winter Games. As Syrigos (2009, p. 22), notes: *"This high-profile visit meant not only that the eyes of the whole world were on the Balkan conflict, but it also brought a break to the hostilities and offered a humanitarian relief to the besieged people of Sarajevo. At the same time, President Samaranch sent a letter to the heads of the IOC member States, asking them to respect the Truce throughout the Lillehammer Games. This letter led to the following results:*

- *A cease-fire between the Sudanese Government and the Sudanese People's Liberation Army was obtained by the Sudanese Olympic Committee.*
- *The armed conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia was suspended.*
- *A General Assembly resolution during the Games encouraged a cease-fire in Bosnia, allowing the dispatch of humanitarian aid and the inoculation of at least 10,000 children in just one day.*
- *During the following Games in Sydney and Athens, a public audience of at least 3.7 billion witnessed what was perhaps the most impressive demonstration of the power of the Truce, when South and North Korean athletes marched together under one flag at the Opening Ceremony of the Games, reflecting hopes for a peaceful and unified Korean Peninsula.*

The fact that the Olympic Truce applied to the Yugoslav civil war lasted only 24 hours, since, immediately after the visit of the IOC delegation hostilities resumed with the known dramatic events that followed, should not be seen as a failure of the Truce, but instead as a force! This primarily because it would be wrong to try to link the concept of "Truce" to that of "Peace". The aim of the Olympic Truce is not to achieve peace per se, but a temporary cessation of hostilities in the name of unity and humanity advocated by Olympism.

As the Director of the International Olympic Truce Centre, Constantinos Filis

(2019), aptly points out in his recent speech at the International Session for Young Participants of the IOA, addressing young people from all over the world: “... you can of course understand the vast importance a ceasefire may have in war zones, if only for a month. This truce provides an opportunity for a number of actions: from the dispatch of humanitarian aid, through the opening of non-war zones, to the provision of the time required to find a compromise. The basic reasoning behind the Olympic Truce is that, through a temporary ceasefire, the parties involved will have enough time, not just to sit around a negotiating table, but also to see the benefits of non-conflict and to consider whether, in the end, it is worthwhile to continue hostilities rather than live in peace. And if not necessarily in harmony, at least in peace!”

Following the first UN Resolution on the implementation of the Olympic Truce, in 1993, the host countries of the following Games proposed that similar resolutions be adopted one year before the Games. Each time, the number of signatories to the resolution is increasing, except for a few exceptions due to strong political opposition, as in the 2008 Beijing Games, where the Resolution was not signed by nine countries, which had recognised Taiwan’s independence.<sup>91</sup> The 2008 Beijing Games were marked by another negative element linked with the implementation of the Olympic Truce. The armed forces of Russia, which had signed the Resolution a year earlier, invaded Georgia, ostentatiously disrespecting the Resolution’s content as well as the commitments taken under the Olympic Truce.

The institution of the Olympic Truce has always been ambitious, but, as history shows, its implementation is anything but complete. However, like other rules of international law, it is probably better to judge from what it has achieved each time it is applied, with regard to preventing conflicts that would otherwise have emerged, and not from what it has not achieved when it is not implemented.

The President of the Hellenic Olympic Committee and member of the IOC for Greece, Spyros Capralos, wrote in “Olympic Truce: Sports as a Platform for Peace”, (2009, p. 11): “... It seems that the only tool that can preserve global coherence and mutual understanding, is the maintenance of the Olympic Truce throughout the duration of the Olympic Games. We all hope to get the message across that, since we can apply the Truce for a few days, we can do even more”.

At the International Forum on Sport, Peace and Development, held in Geneva, in May 2011, the International Olympic Truce Centre, founded in 2000 and based in

<sup>91</sup> Kiribati, Malawi, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Paraguay, Saint Kitts & Nevis, Sao Tome & Principe, Salomon Islands and Tuvalu.

Athens, presented its ambitious programme, with Mr Filis observing: *"...The Olympic Truce does not promise peace. But it offers hope and inspiration. It provides a window of opportunity for dialogue leading to conflict resolution. It promotes a culture of understanding, tolerance, fair competition and respect for diversity. That is why the Truce must be present and visible not only during the Olympic Games but also during the interval between them. As an International Olympic Truce Centre, our goal is to promote dialogue at the widest possible level. To make humanity, which is inspired by sports and the Olympic spirit, go beyond the imagination of peace ... to discuss opportunities for peace ... and to think about our values. But above all, we want to instill in the youth a perspective based on good sportsmanship and a culture of understanding, consensus and dialogue; a culture that seeks common denominators and shows respect for diversity; a culture of peace. We also seek a systematic dialogue between the younger and older generations. We want to hear from young people their concerns about what often appears to be a pointless skirmish or intolerance but sometimes leads to conflicts - even armed conflicts. We want to link their concerns for the future with the cultivation of a new culture whose original ambition is to bridge our differences rather than take the easy path of intensifying them"*.<sup>92</sup>

Surely, the Olympic Truce failed to prevent the Russian invasion of the Republic of Georgia during the 2008 Beijing Games. But, as unacceptable as it was, this invasion did not result in stopping the Games or discouraging the people from supporting the Olympic Movement (Murray & Pigman, 2013, pp. 1098-1118).

The UN has, through its various actions, recognised the power of sport in addressing a range of issues relating to respect for human rights, the right of children to play, the contribution of sport to the promotion of peace. In 2003, with the full support of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the UN gave its consent to a major report on: "Sport for Development and Peace: Towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals". The report led to a Resolution of the General Assembly and then to the proclamation of 2005 as the International Year of Sport and Physical Education. It is too early to say whether this initiative and other similar one will have positive or lasting results (Jackson & Haigh, 2008).

This initiative to strengthen the role of the International Olympic Truce by the UN, as utopian as it may sound, is a typical example of the creation of a natural way of life through sport, a programme carried out in recent years with great success,

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92 [https://www.olympictruce.org/index.php?option=com\\_k2&view=item&id=55:adress-by-filis-at-the-2nd-international-forum-on-sport-and-development&Itemid=290&lang=en](https://www.olympictruce.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=55:adress-by-filis-at-the-2nd-international-forum-on-sport-and-development&Itemid=290&lang=en)

alongside efforts to promote a policy of reconciliation of societies.<sup>93</sup>

Jacques Rogge, former President of the IOC and a strong supporter of the idea of Olympic Truce, notes in the above edition of Truce (2009, p. 9): "... the world around us has a strong desire for peace. Of course, sport cannot impose peace, but it can contribute to inspire it! Sport has the power to reach many people around the globe and, in essence, is a language understood by everyone. Sport also fosters understanding between individuals, facilitates dialogue between divergent communities and can contribute to breeding tolerance between nations".

In 2008, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, called for a restoration of the "Olympic Truce", in which warring parties lay down their arms for the duration of the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver: "...*The Olympic Truce brings hope of at least a temporary respite from violence and armed conflict. It also draws attention to a terrible paradox. At the Olympics and throughout the year, we rightly honour the outstanding achievements of the human body and the positive social values of competitive sport, including team spirit and fairness. Yet all too often, through the carnage of war, we do terrible damage to that same human body, and to our shared values. Peace and stability are essential for people to reach their true potential. The Olympic Truce is based on that yearning, and on ideals shared by the UN and the Olympic Movement alike: global friendship; harmony; non-violence; and non-discrimination....*"<sup>94</sup>

As it is known, UN Resolutions are more symbolic than obligatory. However, in the case of Olympic Truce, we have to admit that after the Resolution of 1993 there have been actions that can really justify the importance of its existence.

Apart from the case of former Yugoslavia, which we referred to previously, the international community experienced a number of actions that created hopes for the implementation of the idea of the Olympic Truce, even if this seems utopic. The following chronologically reported actions that took place, focusing on the consolidation of the idea of Olympic Truce, reflect a kind of sensitivity towards it.

- In 1995, the resolution of the 50th Session of the UN General Assembly supports the idea of building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic Ideal and invites all Member States to uphold the Olympic Truce during the Games of the XXVI Olympiad in Atlanta, US.

93 See UN General Assembly Resolutions A/48/L.9/Rev.1/Add.1 (1993), A/50/L.15/ Add.1 (1995), A/52/L.23/Rev.1/Add.1, A/54/L.26 (1999), A/56/L.47/Add.1 (2001), A/58/L.9 (2003), A/60/L.15/Add.1 (2005), A/62/L.2 (2007), <http://www.un.org/docu-ments/resga.htm> (accessed 28 March 2008)

94 <https://www.undispatch.com/olympic-truce-can-the-world-stop-all-wars/>

- During the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympic Games, tensions in the Persian Gulf region are high. The observance of the Olympic Truce according to UN resolutions offers the opportunity to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to intervene and seek a diplomatic solution to the crisis in Iraq. As was reported later, the US postponed military action against Iraq for long enough not to embarrass the Japanese hosts of the Games in Nagano.
- In 2000, the International Olympic Truce Centre is founded by the International Olympic Committee. The UN Millennium Summit, which is held in New York, from 6 to 8 September, with the participation of more than 150 Heads of State, adopts the Millennium Declaration that includes a special paragraph on the observance of the Olympic Truce.
- In 2001, the 56th UN General Assembly adopts a Resolution in favour of the Olympic Truce as "creating a better world through sports". This idea is based on the core values of the UN, as Kofi Annan says: "The flying of the UN flag at all Olympic events is a visible reminder of the purpose shared between the UN and the IOC ... I call upon all nations to observe the Olympic Truce. I am convinced that in this observance, and by working with the IOC.
- In 2002, the collection of signatures by international personalities in support of the Olympic Truce is launched in Ancient Olympia, during the lighting of the Olympic Flame for the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympic Games. The call is supported by hundreds of dignitaries, including Heads of State, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, religious leaders, heads of international organizations, athletes, Olympic Movement officials, leaders in the fields of business, literature and arts.
- In 2003, the nations of the world unanimously urge humanity to celebrate the Games of the XXVIII Olympiad in Athens in peace, though the adoption of the Olympic Truce resolution supported by 190 UN Member States, a unprecedented number in UN history. Also, in 2004, a specially constructed signature wall is set up where athletes and leaders from around the world declare their support for the Olympic Truce. The tradition of the signature wall during the Olympic Games has continued ever since.
- In 2008, the Games of the XXIV Olympiad take place in August in Beijing, China. Less than two weeks before the opening of the Games, UN Secretary- General Ban Ki-moon joined the General Assembly in calling on all those who are at war to observe the traditional two-week Olympic Truce. "...Let them lay down their weapons, if only temporarily, so that humanity can lay claim to gold even before the Games begin. Such a Truce, while limited in duration, can provide

a pause in which to reconsider the heavy cost of war, as well as an opening to initiate a dialogue and a window to provide relief for suffering populations. It can demonstrate to the world that peace is possible in even the most seemingly intractable situations if we truly work towards it.”<sup>95</sup> A wall of signatures for the Truce is placed in the Olympic Village and is preserved as part of the heritage of the Olympic Games in the Olympic Museum.

- In 2013, the UN General Assembly declares the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace. Since 2014, when it was first celebrated, the 6th April has been an annual celebration of the power of sport to drive social change, community development and to foster peace and understanding.
- In 2015, recognizing the potential of sport as a valuable tool in the achievement of peace and development, the UN General Assembly adopts a Resolution prior to 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games reaffirming its commitment to promote dialogue and reconciliation in areas of conflict during and after the Olympic and Paralympic Games. As a result, highest qualified athletes with refugee status participate in the Games. Athletes left without a home country and a National Olympic Committee to represent, form the Refugee Olympic Team and use the Olympic flag and the Olympic anthem, instead of national symbols. The 2016 Olympic Games showcase sport as a key tool for peace, social inclusion and tolerance, in the fight against racial, ethnic and gender discrimination.
- In 2017, in a strong sign of confidence in the 2018 Winter Olympic Games of PyeongChang, the UN General Assembly adopts the resolution “Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic Ideal” by consensus. Prominent figures of the Olympic Movement sign the Olympic Truce Declaration in Ancient Olympia, Greece, at the time of the Olympic Flame lighting for the Games. This is an ongoing effort for international recognition of the Olympic Truce and of the need for world peace during the Olympic and Paralympic Games, creating the conditions for expansion of this condition beyond them.
- In 2018, the XXIII Winter Olympic Games take place in PyeongChang in South Korea. North Korea agrees to participate in the Games despite their tense relations with the organizers; In a celebration of unity and the Olympic spirit, the athletes of the two countries march side by side at the Opening Ceremony and field a unified team (COR) in women’s ice hockey.

<sup>95</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2008/07/267552-ban-joins-general-assemblys-call-olympic-truce-during-beijing-games>

- In 2020, prominent members of the Olympic Movement, EU and State officials sign the Olympic Truce Declaration in the light of the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympic Games.<sup>96</sup>

As Wassong (2021, p. 280) recalls: "... On 13 November 2017, IOC President Thomas Bach addressed the UN General Assembly a few months prior to the 2018 PyeongChang Olympic Winter Games and repeated this tradition on 9 December for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. The decision to postpone the Olympic Games in April 2020 has not led to a dissolution of the resolutions. In his speeches Bach encouraged the UN Member States to respect the ancient ideal of *ekecheiria* and stressed that the transfer of this ancient tradition to the modern Olympics contributes to safeguarding the universality of the Olympic Games and their global appeal. This is as much analogous to Coubertin's thoughts as the IOC President's comments on the power of the Olympic Games to foster an international understanding and climate, which is not based on polarization and mistrust. According to him, the sports competitions at the Olympic Games as well as living together in the Olympic Village are driving forces to promote exchanges between athletes which will strengthen their intercultural competencies.<sup>97</sup> But Bach has also made it clear that these high expectations could only be achieved if the IOC and the Olympic Games are kept politically neutral and autonomous".

Constantinos Filis, in his recent contribution to the 60th Anniversary IOA's Book (2021, p. 290) expresses his hope for further development of "Olympic Truce", through specific activities: *"The next step we need to take is to enhance cross-cultural exchanges and show the young generation that being different does not mean being unequal. By knowing each other's culture, youngsters are able to de-demonise stereotypes, to break down legends and understand the essence of culture or an idea. At the same time, they have the opportunity to showcase their own culture, special characteristics and ideas and create the basis for an honest dialogue. Having understood the contribution of tolerance and cross-cultural co-operation to building more open societies, the young generation eliminates the causes of conflict. No one fights an idea that is familiar to him or her. He/she may oppose it or try to convince others that his own idea is more appropriate, but he*

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<sup>96</sup> [www. https://olympictruce.org/](https://olympictruce.org/)

<sup>97</sup> Bach, Th. (2017). [https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library//OlympicOrg/IOC/Who-We-Are/Commissions/Public-Affairs-And-Social-Development-Through-Sport/Olympic-Truce/Speech-IOC-President-Thomas-Bach-Olympic-Truce-Resolution-for-PyeongChang-2018.pdf#\\_ga=2.52096105.1761176997.1555933336-1342128553.1540212115](https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library//OlympicOrg/IOC/Who-We-Are/Commissions/Public-Affairs-And-Social-Development-Through-Sport/Olympic-Truce/Speech-IOC-President-Thomas-Bach-Olympic-Truce-Resolution-for-PyeongChang-2018.pdf#_ga=2.52096105.1761176997.1555933336-1342128553.1540212115), accessed 18 December 2020.



*will do that in a peaceful way. Therefore, we can help the young generation to be builders of peaceful coexistence. When we say that we want global peace, we do not support that a universal truth will prevail. We support that people will argue for their beliefs, being ready to accept that their ideas may be enriched by someone else's input. Arguing can prevail when we compare it with the consequences of conflict."*

On 9 July 2021, the President of the UN General Assembly, Volkan Bozkir, made a solemn appeal to the UN Member States for the observance of the Olympic Truce for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, following the Resolution adopted in December 2019. The Resolution calls for the Olympic Truce to be respected from 16 July to 12 September 2021 - seven days before the start of the Olympic Games until seven days after the Paralympic Games.

*"The Olympic Movement aspires to contribute to a peaceful future for all humankind through the educational value of sport, in particular youth," said Bozkir in the appeal. "The Games will bring together athletes from all parts of the world in the greatest of international sports events as a means to promote peace, mutual understanding and goodwill among nations and peoples — goals that are also part of the founding values of the UN. For the second time, the IOC Refugee Olympic Team will participate under the Olympic flag in the Olympic Games in Tokyo, acting as a powerful symbol of inclusion and our shared humanity."*

*"The Olympic Games are the only event today that brings the entire world together in peaceful competition," said IOC President Thomas Bach. "This is why we are so grateful to the UN Member States for their support of the Olympic Truce resolution. With this resolution, they are supporting the Values and Principles that unite us. In this Olympic spirit of universality, solidarity and peace, I invite you all to join hands and to celebrate our unity in all our diversity at the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games and beyond. Let us demonstrate together that our shared humanity is stronger than all the forces that want to divide us."*

Entitled "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic Ideal", the Resolution was passed unanimously at the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly and was co-sponsored by 186 out of 193 UN Member States, demonstrating the recognition by the UN's international community of the power of sport and the relevance of the Olympic Games to bring the world together in peaceful competition, providing hope for a better future.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>98</sup> [https://olympics.com/ioc/news/solemn-appeal-by-united-nations-to-observe-olympic-truce-during-tokyo-2020?fbclid=IwAR3v2dCFXtujwg3lZW8hTGe-XpVbSSG7rP5fM2\\_](https://olympics.com/ioc/news/solemn-appeal-by-united-nations-to-observe-olympic-truce-during-tokyo-2020?fbclid=IwAR3v2dCFXtujwg3lZW8hTGe-XpVbSSG7rP5fM2_)

## 17. The Autonomy of the Olympic Movement

In his speech at the end of the 1908 London Olympic Games,<sup>99</sup> Coubertin explained how the IOC had survived “anonymous attacks”, “improbable cabals” and “fanatical jealousies”, which tried to hinder its course, and characteristically mentioned: “...I once learned a great many things from the history of this country. Among these was that the best way to preserve freedom and to serve democracy is... to maintain islands of independence and stability. We do not tread on the privileges of our associations. We are merely trustees of the Olympic idea”.

As a concept, but also as the aim of the Olympic Movement, autonomy has been explicitly emphasised and supported in the IOC Charter and mentioned in many cases both by IOC Presidents and many members of the wider Olympic family. In the Charter's preamble, autonomy is mentioned as a fundamental Principle of the Olympic Movement: “...Recognising that sport occurs within the framework of society, sports organisations within the Olympic Movement must have the rights and obligations of autonomy, which include freely establishing and controlling the rules of sport, determining the structure and governance of their organisations, enjoying the right of elections free from any outside influence and the responsibility for ensuring that Principles of good governance be applied”.<sup>100</sup>

However, besides this wording related to the fundamental Principles of the Movement, in two other points of the Charter, pertaining to the structure and the operation of the two other parts of the Movement, the International Federations and the National Olympic Committees, autonomy is a precondition for their correct operation in the context of the general presence of the Olympic Movement in each society. Article 25 of the Charter declares the independence and autonomy of the sports Federations that form an integral part of the structure of the Movement; concepts that must be ensured in order to develop and promote the Olympic Movement and its Values.<sup>101</sup> This is also repeated in Article 27, which refers to the role and mission of National Olympic Committees: “...the NOCs must preserve their autonomy and resist all pressures of any kind, including but not limited to political, legal, religious or economic pressures which may prevent them from complying with the Olympic Charter”.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> <https://www.olympic.org/pierre-de-coubertin/the-independence-of-the-ioc>

<sup>100</sup> IOC Charter, Fundamental Principles.

<sup>101</sup> IOC Charter, Rule 25.

<sup>102</sup> IOC Charter, Rule 27.

These are also included in the Agenda 2020 promoted by IOC President Bach, which considers the independence and autonomy of sports organisations in a country not as an objective and target, but as a given fact, in order to promote the cultivation and dissemination of Olympic Values.<sup>103</sup>

The Olympic Movement has already spanned more than 120 years of existence, with upheavals large and small, with victories and defeats in the struggle for its survival, with challenges and compromises with the political powers that surround it. It started out as an idea, was established as a Movement and has now asserted itself as a condition. No longer does anything resemble the conditions under which the idea arose. The Games are now a complex event from an organisational standpoint – every four years they face new requirements, new challenges and, of course, bear no relationship to the Games of the previous century. Today, the Olympic Movement is stronger and more effective and ready to play a leading role not only in international sporting events, but also in the international political scene, and to withstand any effort made by extrinsic factors, including politics, to exploit it.

By the end of the '80s the IOC had steadfastly withstood a set of challenges on the political front engendered by the end of World War II. The Cold War, which lasted for approximately 35 years, gave politics many opportunities to influence the evolution of the Movement from a position of power, perhaps mainly because the Games were a unique platform with global visibility. In subsequent years until the present day, other means of promoting political positions were more effective, reducing the need to use the Movement for other purposes. As technological advances enable citizens to be informed far more easily than a few years ago, the possibility of the Games being used to promote political expediencies and messages is becoming less interesting. In other words, it seems that today's huge technological globalisation has resulted in the decreased exploitation of the Games by political expediencies, in contrast to previous years, when ideological and political expediencies prevailed over the Games and affected them to a great extent.

Olympism is an ideology that suits the Principles and culture of many countries, but unfortunately not all. These Principles are chiefly defined by the Western philosophical roots of the modern Games and are in line with general humanitarian objectives, reinforcing human rights and the Values of international organisations.

103 Recommendation 28: "Support Autonomy" (2014).

This is illustrated by the relationship between the IOC and the UN, as mentioned before. At the same time, the Games offer the potential of universal application of these Values, calling upon the 206 member-states to respect the Olympic Charter that includes non-discrimination and respect for human dignity (Miah & Garcia, 2012).



*Dr Thomas Bach: "...sports must acknowledge its relationship to politics and big business and work with those who run global society, while still maintaining its neutrality. Those relationships must be based on mutual respect."*

In the speech given by IOC President, Bach, at the Opening Ceremony of the 2014 Asian Games in Incheon, referred to in the beginning of this book<sup>104</sup> it was made clear that the roles have now changed and the significance of what he says must not be misconstrued: *"...sports must acknowledge its relationship to politics and big business and work with those who run global society while still maintaining its neutrality. Those relationships must be based on mutual respect. Global political and business leaders need to respect the autonomy of sporting bodies or risk diminishing their positive influence"*.

As Jagodic and Matesa (2017, p. 376) observe: *"...The autonomy of sport is*

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104 <https://www.apnews.com/8fa01a7b258c4ad8b0e486d2237439b6>

deeply supported by the specificity of sport. It brings the necessary understanding of the basic differences between sports and other activities of young people. It is important to acknowledge the special character of different sport rules, such as separate competitions for men and women, limitations on the number of participants in competitions, or the need to ensure uncertainty concerning the outcomes and to preserve a competitive balance among the clubs taking part in the same competitions. The specificity of the sport structure, including notably the autonomy and diversity of sports organizations, a pyramid structure of competitions from grassroots to elite level and organized solidarity mechanisms among the different levels and operators, the organization of sport on a national basis, and the principle of a single federation per sport”.

There are many ways of interpreting the definition of autonomy. Jean Loup Chapellet (2010, p. 49), fleshes out the appropriate meaning of the concept of autonomy in sports, including its most important elements: “...the autonomy of sports is, within the framework of the national, the European and the international law, the possibility for non-governmental, non-profit-making sports organizations to:

- establish, amend and interpret rules appropriate to their sport freely, without undue political or economic influence;
- choose their leaders democratically, without interference by States or third parties;
- obtain adequate funds from public or other sources, without disproportionate obligations;
- use these funds to achieve objectives and carry on the activities chosen without severe external constraints;
- draw up, in consultation with the public authorities, legitimate standards proportionate to the fulfilment of these objectives.”

The concept of autonomy within the framework of the national sports structure has frequently been ignored by governments, which, in their effort to draw on the positive influence of sport on society, try to manipulate the administrations of sports institutions.

The UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for Physical Education and Sport, at its 4th meeting, held in Paris (FRA), from 9 to 16 October 1984, adopted the recommendation entitled: “*Promotion of physical education and sport*”, in which it reaffirmed that the physical education and sport sectors for which it was responsible, merely formed part of continuing education and, in the recommendation: “*Relations with international sports organizations*”, it recommended that the mem-

ber States respect the autonomy of the national sports organizations, the origin of their governing bodies and their regulations and support, as appropriate, the sports movement represented at the national level by an Olympic Committee or by other sports organizations. *"It is not for governments to supervise the competitive side of sport, since that responsibility has been given to the non-governmental sector, to the national or international federations, and in the specific area of the Olympic Movement to the International Olympic Committee. Both sectors must replace attempts to dominate by dialogue and comprehension"* (Mora, 1987, p. 333).

During the past 50 years, the IOC has confirmed, in many instances, that the Olympic Movement autonomy shall be enforced. The banning of South Africa and Rhodesia from the Games exemplified this aptly. This was done in staunch support of one of its most fundamental Values; respect of diversity and non-acceptance of any form of racial discrimination. Even in the recent cases of India and Kuwait, the IOC interceded spectacularly for a less important reason: the independence of sport organisations in the two countries was being violated.

In December 2012, the NOC of India was suspended and disallowed from participating in the organisation, due to its failure to comply with the Olympic Charter and its statutes, relating specifically to good governance of a NOC. As a consequence, it was banned from all Olympic activities, including participating in the Games. Its suspension was partially lifted during the 2014 Sochi Winter Games, giving its athletes the possibilities to continue competing under their country's colours, whilst it was initially decided that they would participate under the Olympic flag as independent athletes. However, an Indian athlete, who competed before this ban was lifted, appeared in the Games records as an Independent Olympic Participant.

Despite the efforts by decision makers in the IOC to work with the government of India to overcome the crisis, which was due to repeated violation of Olympic Charter rules, new instances took place in February 2019, when India denied entry visas to two Pakistani athletes who sought to participate in the shooting preliminaries in New Delhi.<sup>105</sup> After the said event, the IOC stated that the refusal of visas for competitors went against the Principles of the Olympic Charter relating to discrimination and political interference in Olympic affairs: *"...since becoming aware of the issue, and in spite of intense last-minute efforts and*

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<sup>105</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-olympics-india-pakistan/ioc-urges-india-isolation-after-pakistani-athletes-denied-visas-idUSKCN1QB036>

*discussions with the Indian government authorities, no solution has been found to allow the Pakistani delegation to enter India in time to compete. As a result, the IOC Executive Board also decided to suspend all discussions with the Indian NOC and government regarding potential applications for hosting future sports and Olympic-related events in India".* At the same time, the IOC also urged all international sports federations not to hold events in India or grant hosting rights to the country for future competitions, until the government had provided "clear written guarantees" to ensure access to all athletes, irrespective of their nationality.<sup>106</sup>

The case of the suspension of the Kuwait NOC was even more serious, if one takes into account the fact that Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah, IOC member in Kuwait and President of the Association of National Olympic Committees, is in continuous litigation with the government of his own country. Indeed, in order to facilitate a solution being found for the reinstatement of his country's NOC by the IOC, Al-Sabah stood down provisionally from the position of IOC member until the court case with the Royal Family governing Kuwait comes to an end.

The KOC's participation in Olympic events had been suspended from 2010 to 2012 and from 2015 to 2018, because the KOC's autonomy was not guaranteed by the sport law enacted by the government, in accordance with which the State could intercede in its elections. It is a fact that the IOC had repeatedly tried, since 2007, to work with the government of Kuwait, unfortunately without achieving a solution that was in accordance with the Principles of the Charter. In August 2018 and in view of the Youth Olympic Games in Buenos Aires, the IOC decided to temporarily lift the suspension that had been imposed, based on the positive developments up to that moment in time in their discussions with the Kuwaiti government. Finally, on 16 July 2019, after the government of Kuwait had fully met the demands of the IOC and passed legislation to regulate the issues that had brought about the intervention of the latter and the interruption of its relations with the country's NOC, the suspension of the Kuwaiti NOC was lifted and relations between the two institutions returned to normal.

As the decision of the IOC Executive Board Stated: *"...the first step of the roadmap (revision and adoption of new statutes for sports clubs, followed by elections) was successfully completed within the prescribed deadline (end of January 2019). The second step (revision and adoption of new statutes for the National*

<sup>106</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-olympics-india-pakistan/ioc-urges-india-isolation-after-pakistani-athletes-denied-visas-idUSKCN1QB036>

*Sports Federations, followed by elections) was implemented in close coordination with the International Federations (IFs) concerned and was successfully completed in early June 2019. The third and final step (revision and adoption of the KOC statutes, followed by KOC elections) was successfully completed on 30 June 2019, with the holding of the KOC Elective General Assembly".<sup>107</sup>*

India and Kuwait were not the only countries, which the IOC confronted due to government interference in sports. The cases of South Africa and Rhodesia and the manner with which the IOC handled these sensitive cases of the racist behaviour of the respective regimes towards their country's athletes, have been examined in previous chapters. In recent years, a set of decisions are characteristic of the decisiveness with which IOC tackled political interference in sports.

In July 2007, the IOC suspended the Panama NOC due to State interference in the running of the latter. The ban was lifted in April 2008, in time for the athletes to participate in the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. However, yet another suspension in the relations of the two institutions took place in January 2011, when the Panamanian President demanded the resignation of its NOC, but this was averted when the issue was resolved to the satisfaction of the IOC.

In January 2011, the Ghana NOC was also suspended because its government refused to amend the sports law in order to prevent the interference of government bodies in the appointment of members of the Committee and all sports federations. The ban was lifted in October 2011, when a new sports law was enacted to prevent political interference, allowing Ghana athletes to participate in the 2012 London Olympic Games.<sup>108</sup>

In 2015, the IOC warned the Sri Lanka NOC that it was at risk of being suspended if it did not revise its proposed sports legislation, pursuant to which high-ranking officials were barred from standing for re-election during the elections that had been set for the end of the year. This governmental interference was cited as a major reason for Sri Lanka being stripped of its hosting rights of the 2017 Asian Youth Games (Butler, 2015).

In August 2016, Kenya's Sports Minister disbanded its NOC and transferred its duties to a non-government organisation under the name "Sports Kenya", in response to alleged mismanagement identified in the Kenya delegation at 2016 Rio Games. In March 2017, the IOC cut funding and threatened suspension of

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<sup>107</sup> <https://www.olympic.org/news/ioc-lifts-suspension-of-kuwait-olympic-committee>

<sup>108</sup> IOC lifts ban on Ghana', ghananewsagency.org, <https://ghananewsagency.org/sports/ioc-lifts-ban-on-ghana-32821> (2011)



the NOC, when the latter refused to accept reforms in its governance requested by the IOC.<sup>109</sup>

Recent reports suggest that Saudi Arabia is coming under increased scrutiny from the IOC and FIFA in connection with a growing trend of appointments of government-backed appointees to the Kingdom's national sports federations, which may result in the country's NOC being provisionally suspended. A suspension from international sport would significantly impact the Kingdom's successful national and club football teams in international competitions and may also affect its progressive economic reforms, of which sport – and in particular the privatisation of its top-tier football clubs – is a central component, owing to sport's increasingly valuable geo-political status in the Gulf region.<sup>110</sup>

The IOC did not hesitate to show its strength recently towards the Italian NOC (CONI). At the end of 2018, the Italian Parliament approved a law to set-up an organisation separate from CONI called "Sport and Health" (Sport e Salute), which was charged with the responsibility of distributing State subsidies to the sports Federations; a competence which had belonged for many decades to CONI. The IOC considered that such a legislative provision constituted blatant interference in the autonomy of the sports movement in Italy, inconsistent with the Values of the IOC Charter. In August 2019, the IOC sent a strict letter to CONI, in which it expressed "its concern about its role in the future of Italian sports" and reminded the NOC of its obligation in line with the Charter to withstand any type of political pressure that affects the autonomy of the Institution and which is incompatible with autonomy in sports, as established in the 1994 Resolution of the General Assembly of the UN and threatened to suspend it if it did not enter into talks with political leadership and resolve the matter as soon as possible.<sup>111</sup> It seems that this was one of the most crucial confrontations between the Olympic Movement and a government attempting to ignore the NOC autonomy. For IOC, it was extremely difficult to punish CONI by suspending it, especially in view of the forthcoming 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, in case the later would not find an acceptable solution approved by both parties to the conflict. The outcome of this case is expected to have a huge

109 Kenya runs the risk of an Olympic ban, thanks to boardroom power games', *theconversation.com*, 26 March 2017, <https://theconversation.com/kenya-runs-the-risk-of-an-olympic-ban-thanks-to-boardroom-power-games-74996>

110 <https://www.lawinsport.com/topics/sports/item/governmental-interference-in-global-sport-why-kuwait-is-still-in-the-olympic-wilderness> (2018)

111 <https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1083142/ioc-warning-for-coni>

impact as regards the autonomy of the sports movement and the interpretation given by the IOC to this meaning.

Finally, CONI is set to avoid sanctions from the IOC after the Italian Government approved a decree to guarantee CONI's autonomy. The Italian Government's Cabinet approved a decree that safeguarded CONI, in one of Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte's last acts before he resigned. *"The Cabinet has approved a decree containing rules that set out the autonomy of CONI," said Italian Sports Minister Vincenzo Spadafora.* Now the Italian Parliament will have the last word when it converts it into law. It was unlikely that Italy would have been so heavily penalized tomorrow, given our country's long and glorious sporting and democratic history, but today's decision eliminates any doubt and resolves the problem of CONI's independence."<sup>112</sup>

Of course, the IOC has proven in the past that it is not afraid to adopt a tough approach towards a State or a political leadership, when it considers that the Olympic Charter is being undermined by undue governmental interference and has used various methods to achieve the restoration of regularity in a country's administrative organisations. These include interim cuts to the funding provided by the IOC to the country's NOC, threatening a suspension and banning the NOC from Olympic affairs, either by imposing a suspension for as long as required for the State bodies to comply with the stipulations of the Charter, or by banning the NOC from the organisation. Undoubtedly, banning a country from the Games for as long as there is an outstanding matter almost always forces the governments to take the necessary remedial action, pressed by the public opinion and all the sports family, not only domestically, but also internationally.

To date, the latest episode in an effort made by the IOC to defend the Values set forth in its Charter, may also be the most serious, if one considers the publicity it received, but also the size of the Olympic Committee that it concerned:

In December 2014, a public TV station in Germany broadcasted a three-part documentary film, based on the testimonies of a Russian female athlete, Yuliya Stepanova and her husband Vitaly Stepanov, a former employee of the Russian Anti-Doping Agency, according to which both Russia's NOC and the competent State services of Russia knew and promoted the use of banned substances by athletes in various sports. That is how the world started learning about what really happened in Russia in 2014, which was strongly reminiscent of the practices of East Germany in the '60s.

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112 <https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1103458/italian-olympic-committee-tokyo-2020>

After this disclosure, it became known that the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) took charge of the issue, and, after carrying out extensive research, concluded that the scandal was well-founded and was related not only to the sport federations in Russia, but the government itself. Investigations showed that the key person responsible for the scandal was Grigory Rodchenkov, Director of the Anti-Doping Laboratory in Russia, who admitted his involvement “...to facilitate one of the most elaborate doping ploys in sports history”.<sup>113</sup> It should be noted here that WADA, despite receiving eponymous reports on the situation prevailing in the Anti-Doping Laboratory in Russia since 2010, launched its investigation to find out if the complaints were founded only when the German TV network went public with the story. However, besides Rodchenkov, many senior government officials were exposed by the investigation, reaching the highest echelons of Russian government. In November 2015, the International Association of Athletics Federation (IAAF) provisionally suspended all Russian track and field athletes from international competitions and a great number of nations around the world called for a blanket Russian ban from the Olympics. The IOC decided against a blanket ban, instead allowing athletes’ respective IFs to decide on the competitor’s eligibility. In addition to being approved by their own sport’s governing body, these Russian athletes, who did not have any history of doping, had to abide by strict rules and regulations.<sup>114</sup>

This decision created a particularly tense climate in the sports world and resulted in the emergence of many strong proponents of banning all Russian athletes, especially after the WADA report was publicised by Canadian lawyer Richard McLaren, indicating that there were justifiable grounds for believing that high-ranking State officials had participated in the scandal.<sup>115 116 117</sup>

Nevertheless, the IOC decided to adopt a different approach, excluding from the sanctions, the athletes who were “clean”, a decision that, although criticised by many in the Olympic Movement, including many IOC members, in hindsight appears to have been correct.

113 Athletics Doping: Russia Provisionally Suspended By IAAF, BBC (Nov.2015), <http://www.bbc.com/sport/athletics/348118>

114 Athletics Doping: Russia Provisionally Suspended By IAAF, BBC (2015), <http://www.bbc.com/sport/athletics/3481189>

115 <http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/2016/jul/30/ioc-sets-up-3-person-panel-to-rule-on-russian/>

116 World Anti-Doping Agency: Independent Commission – Report 1, 9 November 2015.

117 “Athletics doping: Wada commission recommends Russia suspension, BBC, 9 November 2015.

In response to the IOC's decision the IOC President, Bach, said that he knew that many would not be satisfied, but that this was the best way to protect and give justice to clean athletes. *"Due to the highly contested views surrounding the Russian National Team's participation in the 2016 Olympics, as well as IOC's interest in promoting a drug-free sport, the IOC should adopt a comprehensive and universal anti-doping law. This will prevent backlash from a scandal like this from happening in future Olympics"* (Cuffey, 2018, p. 667).

On 16 July 2016, the IOC Executive Board decided, amongst other things, not to ban all Russian athletes from the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, but only those that had been sanctioned in the past for using forbidden substances, irrespective of: a) whether they had served their sanction or not and b) the gravity of their infringement. In summary, the key points of the IOC decision were the following:

- *"Given the urgency of the situation, with the Olympic Games Rio 2016 starting in a few days, and the athletes' entry process already underway, the IOC Executive Board had to take a preliminary decision with regard to the participation of Russian athletes. Prof. McLaren states in his report that: "he had fulfilled partially the mandate that he received". This is why the IOC supports his request to continue and finalise his work. On the other hand, this situation leads to an urgency for the IOC, which does not allow it sufficient time for hearings for affected athletes, officials and organisations.*
- *Under these exceptional circumstances, Russian athletes in any of the 28 Olympic sports (included in the programme) of the Summer Games have to assume the consequences of what amounts to a "collective responsibility" in order to protect the credibility of the Olympic Games, and the "presumption of innocence" cannot be applied to them.*
- *Pursuant to which, the IOC will accept entry in the Games only for athletes that will follow a set of conditions and will be chosen by the respective International Federation".*<sup>118</sup>

In December 2016, in view of the 2018 PyeongChang Olympic Winter Games, the IOC set up two Commissions to investigate the case. The first Commission, led by Samuel Schmid, former President of Switzerland, was charged with investigating in depth the reports publicised to date about the extensive participation of government officials in the scandal and determining the extent of the unlawful behaviour inside Russia. The second Commission, led by IOC member Denis

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<sup>118</sup> <https://www.olympic.org/news/decision-of-the-ioc-executive-board-concerning-the-participation-of-russian-athletes-in-the-olympic-games-rio-2016>

Oswald, undertook the responsibility, after investigating in depth the results of the 2014 Sochi Olympic Games and upon examining all those athletes and technical advisors involved in the Games, to determine the fate of those found to have violated WADA provisions.<sup>119</sup>

The Schmid Report was submitted to the IOC on 2 December 2017 and included a series of strong indications of extensive participation of senior Russian governmental officials in this huge scandal. As was natural, in view of this latest event and to support the autonomy of the IOC and the other sports organisations, the IOC decided to suspend the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) and to ban it from the 2018 PyeongChang Games.<sup>120</sup>

However, the ROC's ban was not going to cost clean Russian athletes their participation in the Games. Upon discussing and approving the Schmid Report, the IOC Executive Board reached the following decision:

- *To suspend the Russian Olympic Committee with immediate effect.*
- *To invite individual Russian athletes (under strict conditions) to the Pyeong Chang Olympic Winter Games. These athletes will participate, be it in individual or team competitions, under the name "Olympic Athlete from Russia". They will compete under the Olympic Flag and the Olympic Anthem will be played.*
- *To exclude the then Minister of Sport, Mr Vitaly Mutko, and his then Deputy Minister, Mr Yuri Nagornyykh, from any participation in all future Olympic Games.*
- *To withdraw Mr Dmitry Chernyshenko, the former CEO of the Organising Committee Sochi 2014, from the Coordination Commission Beijing 2022.*
- *To suspend ROC President Alexander Zhukov as an IOC Member, given that his membership is linked to his position as ROC President.*
- *Finally, provided these decisions are fully respected and implemented by the ROC and by the invited athletes, the IOC may partially or fully lift the suspension of the Russian Olympic Committee and permit it to be present at the Closing Ceremony of the Games.*

After this decision had been reached, the IOC President stated: "...this was an

119 [https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/IOC/Who-We-Are/Commissions/Disiplinary-Commission/IOC-DC-Schmid/IOC-Disiplinary-Commission-Schmid\\_Report.pdf#\\_ga=2.151345593.1672747384.1512397320-562117942.1505236478](https://stillmed.olympic.org/media/Document%20Library/OlympicOrg/IOC/Who-We-Are/Commissions/Disiplinary-Commission/IOC-DC-Schmid/IOC-Disiplinary-Commission-Schmid_Report.pdf#_ga=2.151345593.1672747384.1512397320-562117942.1505236478)

120 <https://www.olympic.org/news/ioc-suspends-russian-noc-and-creates-a-path-for-clean-individual-athletes-to-compete-in-pyeongchang-2018-under-the-olympic-flag>

*unprecedented attack on the integrity of the Olympic Games and sport. The IOC, after following due process, has issued proportional sanctions for this systemic manipulation while protecting the clean athletes. This should draw a line under this damaging episode and serve as a catalyst for a more effective anti-doping system led by WADA”, and continued: “...as an athlete myself, I feel very sorry for all the clean athletes from all NOCs who are suffering from this manipulation. Working with the IOC Athletes’ Commission, we will now look for opportunities to make up for the moments they have missed on the finish line or on the podium”.*<sup>121</sup>

As Sir Craig Reedie (WADA President from 2014 to 2019), describes the RUSADA case in his article in the 60th Anniversary IOA's Book (2021), in September 2018, WADA's Executive Committee (ExCo), approved the recommendation of the independent Compliance Review Committee (CRC) to reinstate RUSADA's compliance, subject to the strict condition that the Russian authorities provide WADA with access to the stored samples and the authentic electronic data in the former Moscow Laboratory, which amounted to crucial evidence in cases that WADA wanted to bring against those who cheated as part of the Russian doping scheme.

In January 2019, WADA gained access to the Moscow Laboratory and retrieved 24 terabytes of data. Unfortunately, following a painstaking authentication process, a proportion of the data were found to have been manipulated and a non-compliance procedure was opened against RUSADA.

Following a CRC recommendation, in December 2019, the WADA's ExCo unanimously agreed that RUSADA be declared non-compliant for four years with a range of strong consequences attached. Not surprisingly, RUSADA refused to accept the decision and so the case was brought to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). In December 2020, CAS upheld WADA's decision and declared RUSADA non-compliant again for a period of two years and imposed significant consequences. “...The CAS ruling was a clear endorsement of WADA's assertion that data from the Moscow Laboratory were intentionally altered prior to and while they were being forensically copied by WADA Intelligence and Investigations (I&I) in January 2019 as part of its Operation LIMS, in contravention of critical criteria set by the ExCo in September 2018. WADA was, however, very disappointed that the CAS Panel did not endorse all the recommended consequences for the four-year period it requested. WADA believed they were

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<sup>121</sup> <https://www.olympic.org/news/ioc-suspends-russian-noc-and-creates-a-path-for-clean-individual-athletes-to-compete-in-pyeongchang-2018-under-the-olympic-flag>

*proportionate and reasonable. Ultimately, WADA was not the judge, but the prosecutor and the decision of the Panel had to be followed. These were still the strongest set of consequences ever imposed on any country for doping-related offences and the award clearly endorsed the resolute, process-driven approach taken by WADA in dealing effectively with this case"* (Reedie, 2021, p. 170).

According to CAS ruling, Russia was not permitted to participate in, bid for or host any covered event, including both the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Tokyo (2021) and Beijing (2022) and many other major events, for the subsequent two years. Russia will compete as "ROC" and the Russian flag will not fly, nor its anthem play. The IOC confirmed Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 will be played for Russian gold medallists at Tokyo 2020 and the 2022 Winter Olympics in Beijing. It had been proposed after CAS rejected the use of the folk song Katyusha, considered to have been directly associated with Russia, which would be in breach of the doping sanctions imposed on the country.

The world of anti-doping has learned a lot from the Russia saga. Today, the global anti-doping program is much stronger than it was at the time of the Sochi Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2014.

Besides the RUSADA case, another case, of equal importance, came to tarnish the IOC's integrity, this time with dramatic results. Immediately after the end of the 2016 Rio Olympic Games, the Brazilian police arrested Carlos Nuzman, President of the Organising Committee, President of Brazil's Olympic Committee and distinguished IOC member, on charges of corruption and suspicion of buying votes from African members for the selection of Rio at the Copenhagen Summit in 2009. Also involved in this case was the Senegalese Lamine Diack, honorary IOC member, who was arrested by the French police authorities on charges of bribery for vote buying on behalf of Rio and Doha (WFC), as well as hiding doping cases, in his capacity as President of the International Association of Athletics Federations.

Diack resigned from both positions and is still under house arrest until his trial takes place.<sup>122</sup> *"The IOC suspended Nuzman but did not punish the Brazilian OC, permitting its athletes to participate in the 2020 Tokyo Games"* (Miller, 2019, p. 540).

Richard Pound, the senior IOC member at this moment, Chairman of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) from 1999 to 2007 and currently the IOC Representative on the WADA Foundation Board, in one of its latest articles published at the

<sup>122</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/sport/athletics/34782521>

*Journal of Olympic Studies* (2020, p.p. 16-18) observes: "... if WADA had failures in the overall process, they were largely matters of ineffective communications and insufficiently forceful and timely rejections of unjustified criticism directed at it from several quarters. The fact remains that, when all the smoke has cleared, it was the two WADA investigations that exposed the nature and extend of the Russian doping scheme, all with little or no assistance from the sport stakeholders and none at all from Russians. {...} Duty and responsibilities in the sport context are inseparable. Each contains elements of the other. For sport to work properly, there must be an ongoing duty to act responsibly. Responsibility carries with it, in turn, a recognized duty to ensure all elements of that duty are actively engaged whenever decisions are taken, rules are enacted and applied, competitions are organized and run, and the rights of individuals and organizations are affected. {...} Today's sporting contests may see themselves replaced by lesser forms of sport, such as increasingly violent gladiatorial contests or sedentary screen-based activities that leave individuals physically impoverished and emotionally isolated. The oncoming tidal wave of diabetes may well be the next pandemic. In social terms, the rule of law becomes replaced by the amoral exercise of raw and untrammelled power. Signs of that already exist in many countries. The challenge is huge. The consequences are stark. Sport must make its choice."



## PART TWO

### **Olympic Games with political ramifications**

The first part of the treatise attempted a theoretical and historical approach of the interference of politics in sports and its exploitation of the Games. Additionally, attempts by the Olympic Movement to react to such interference, as well as the relationship between politics and sports in the 125 years of their co-existence were examined.

The second part records all forms of political or ideological interference in all the Summer Olympic Games from Athens in 1896 to Tokyo 2020, whether these affected the staging of the Games or conversely, the domestic and international settings were affected by the Games. Corresponding phenomena occurred, to a much lesser extent of course, in the Winter Olympics as well, however the Summer Olympics, due to the larger number of participating athletes and officials and the global interest that they attract, constituted a much more attractive platform to demonstrate political power.

In the historical overview that follows, the phenomenon of political interference in the Games takes on various forms, depending on the era in which it is exercised and the international environment in each era, proving that the Olympic Movement and politics never ceased co-existing throughout all phases of history and, to a lesser or greater degree, they have done so in all Games until the present day. One hundred and twenty four years separate the 1896 Athens Olympic Games from the recent 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games – years full of political and ideological events that marked the course of the Olympic Movement, and which followed general international developments and changes caused by political regimes, revolutions, wars, accession of States to independence, anti-colonial and anti-racist movements and international

economic realignments. Based on this approach, an attempt is made in the next chapters to provide a timeline for the Games, observing the changes not only to transnational relations, but also the effect that these had on the Olympic Movement itself.

The first steps of the institution were recorded in the first set of Games, which offered a lot of joy, but also a lot of disappointment to Coubertin, along with the first indications of political interference in their staging. The second set of Games is obviously affected by the important changes brought about by World War I in Europe and its new economic and ideological structure, as shaped in the Interwar years. The era that followed World War II was especially important, as regards the new approach to the phenomenon of the Olympic Movement, through the dynamic related to the conflict between East and West and the emergence of new nations in the Asian and African regions. However, the most important period of political and ideological intervention in sport was undoubtedly the 20 years from 1968 to 1988, during which the greatest challenges emerged, putting the resilience of the Movement to the test. Finally, in the time period that followed the fall of real socialism, a clear role reversal appears in the relationship of sports and politics, with the independence and autonomy of the Movement prevailing over all attempts to exploit it.

The following graph illustrates the political interference phenomena, whether in the form of abstentions from the Games (boycotts), or in the form of ideological propaganda or protest and, other times, in the form of the provocative promotion of a political/economic system of governance, and clearly shows that the tension that appeared in the '60s, '70s and '80s has dropped significantly, plotting an imaginary "curve" of great interest. The political conflict of two worlds, East and West, is clearly reflected in the extent and intensity of the interventions which, after the fall of the Berlin wall, are significantly reduced, almost to the point of being non-existent.

## **18. Coubertin's Olympiads**

### **Athens 1896 - Paris 1900 - Saint Louis 1904 - London 1908 - Stockholm 1912**

As mentioned in Part One, Chapter 2 of the realisation of Coubertin's vision to revive the Olympic Games in modern times took place in a stiflingly conservative Europe at the end of the 19th century, which inevitably affected the whole structure of the newly established organisation he created in 1894 at the Sorbonne Congress. Based on the chivalry of the European Middle Ages with the Principles that composed it, this environment also strengthened his own positions in favour of

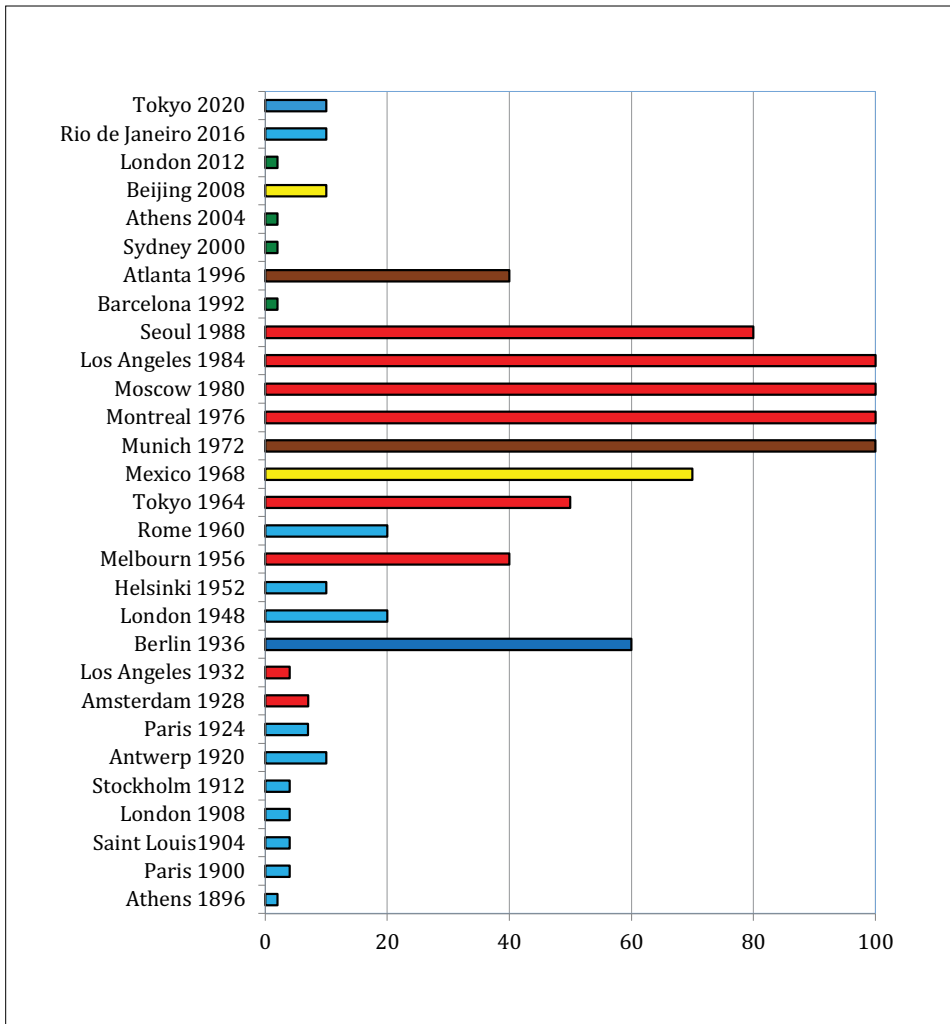


Table 1.

*Political interferences and threats that have traumatized the Summer Olympic Games.*

In **RED**, the boycotts

In **YELLOW**, the ideological activisms

In **BLUE**, the political interferences of high tension

In **LIGHT BLUE**, the political interferences of low tension

In **BROWN**, the terrorist attacks

In **GREEN**, no political interferences

amateurism, respect for the weak, peace and development of the body together with education.

Based on these characteristics, he tried to build his neo-Olympism away from material and political approaches. This is why, no other country, except Greece with its history, could host the first Olympic Games, since the Baron's entire philosophy had to be based on the place that gave birth to Olympism, even under the adverse conditions, in which it was developed in antiquity.

During the period from 1896 to the Great War, the European societies who were not familiar with this new model of sport, were not ready to welcome and support Coubertin's vision, as was proven in practice. That is why the various editions of the Games held during this first period, brought a lot of disappointment to this great man. It is characteristic that with the fear he expressed of "deviations" in the course of the Movement, which he had observed a few years before his death, he wanted to warn the immature society of the imminent dangers from exploiting the movement, demanding that the supporters of Olympism remain unscathed from any attempt to alter the essence of the Games' revival, focusing his attention on the development of education. The Games organised during this period proved how right he was after all.

### **Athens 1896: Revival of the Games**

Athens was selected at the Sorbonne Congress, in 1894, to host the first modern Games, following a proposal by Coubertin himself. It was more of a symbolic act, since it was known that the political and economic situation in Greece at that time was volatile and weak. The Greek State, having suffered bankruptcy in 1893, was practically unable to finance such a major event. The then Prime Minister, Charilaos Trikoupis, was firmly opposed to the organisation of the Games, fearing that they would lead to financial disaster. However, both the opposition and the Royal dynasty saw this event as an opportunity to strengthen their position in the internal affairs of the State.

In a recent study prepared by David Miller on behalf of the IOC (2019, p. 30), it is argued that: *"...the choice of Athens as the first host city of the modern Olympic Games had already been decided before the Sorbonne Congress, between Coubertin, the Crown Prince Constantine and the then President of the IOC, the Greek scholar Dimitrios Vikelas. Only after the intervention of Prince Constantine, Honorary President of the Organising Committee, and his personal contact with Georgios Averoff, a wealthy Greek from Egypt, who donated more than 1,000,000*

drachmas for the reconstruction of the Panathenaic Stadium, it was possible to organise the event, which was to remain in the history of the Olympic Movement as the "First International Olympic Games". The donation of Averoff and other funding contributed decisively to the financial success of the Games".

Lennartz, (2010, pp. 138-145), referring to the participation of German athletes in the Games, notes: "... despite the fact that the German Turners Associations<sup>123</sup> had repeatedly announced that they would boycott the Athens Games, although they had been invited only by the Greek Organising Committee and not by the IOC and their numerous attacks against Coubertin in the German press, a relatively large group of German athletes, including members of the Turners, finally participated in the Games. The young gymnasts had not perceived the ideological reservations of their superiors. All they wanted was to make a nice trip and win a victory in Athens. Unlike most gymnasts who had their national ideologies, other athletes had an international orientation and developed a special interest in the Games. In fact, the reason for the German participation in the Games was mainly political! Prince Constantine, married to Princess Sophia, sister of the German Emperor Wilhelm II, was President of the Greek Organising Committee. This reason, and his many holidays and visits to Germany, may have given him the nickname "the German". It is well known that Emperor Wilhelm II was very close to his sister. In 1889, he attended her wedding in Greece and from the beginning of the century he often spent his holidays in Corfu".

The whole political world of Germany approved the Emperors' positive view of the Games as well as the support he provided to the Greek Royal Family and, of course, to his sister, Queen Sophia of Greece.

As Koulouris (2010, p. 73), aptly observes: "... apart from their obvious association with patriotism, the Athens Olympic Games were used as a tool for foreign policy to serve the so-called 'national interest'. Initially, it was not considered that the Games were likely to become the field of diplomatic exploitation. On the contrary, the organisation of the Games had become the object of a local conflict between the government and the National Assembly {...}. Nevertheless, after the successful staging of the Games, the "Olympic festival" was, for obvious reasons, linked to Greek foreign policy and strategy in the context of the resolution of the East-

123 Turners Associations were well-known German-American gymnastic associations whose members were guided by liberal political views. They took part in the Revolution of 1848-1849 and many of their members, after their defeat, fled to the US where they joined the North and contributed to Abram Lincoln's victory.

*ern Question. Due to their undeniable success, the Games enhanced not only the prestige of the dynasty and especially the heir to the throne, but also the national self-confidence and the irredentist aspirations of the Greeks”.*



*24th March 1896: The first day of the first contemporary Olympic Games in Athens.*

Although there was no unexpected political event of international interest in this first experimental endeavour, the political impact of the Games was important at the national level. Georgiadis (2004, p. 127) reports that: *“...after the international recognition of its organisational consistency, there was a sense of national moral uplift, which led to: (a) a great development of sport in the country, with the creation of many sports clubs, which contributed to the consolidation of the Greek Olympic Movement, and (b) the rise of nationalism, which resulted in an incorrect assessment of the situation, which led Greece to a war with Turkey with known disastrous results.”* *Ethniki Etaireia*, in which Dimitris Vikelas, the first President of the IOC, also took part, was a lever of pressure for the country to get involved in this war. In its apology, which was published after Greece’s defeat, *Ethniki Etaireia* recognises as one of the reasons that pushed it into the war, the renewed self-confidence of the Greek people, following the Games”.

Miller (2019, p. 33) informs us that: *“After the great success of the 1896 Athens*

Olympic Games, the Greeks expressed their desire for the Games to be held permanently in Greece. However, Coubertin, a skilled diplomat and fan of internationalism, rejected this proposal. Initially, Dimitrios Vikelas sided with this view, but, driven by his patriotic feelings, was forced to publicly support the Greek proposal, which was obviously not implemented. Nevertheless, Vikelas supported and managed to pass, with many reservations, another proposal: the organisation in Athens of the "Intercalated Olympic Games" every four years, half-way between the Games of the Olympiad. The first and last such Games took place in 1906 and were never recognised as Olympic Games, since Coubertin was strongly opposed, making his view very clear by his absence from the event ".

As Lennertz (2002, p. 12) notes: "...The Games in Athens had brought out mixed feelings in Coubertin. On the one hand, he was excited to see his vision realised with such success in the capital of the country that gave birth to Olympism. On the other hand, he felt deeply insulted by the fact that his name was nowhere mentioned as "the man who revived the Olympic Games" or "the person, who chose Athens as the first step on the path of the Olympic Movement", in any of the events during the Games. Greek newspapers showcased, perhaps more than they should have, the contribution of Vikelas in the entire effort to revive the Games, whilst they did not have a lot to say about Coubertin. Coubertin bore this ingratitude badly and did not hesitate to confide this to Vikelas, in his letter dated April 1896. He couldn't, however, at that time have imagined how slighted he would feel later both in the Games in Paris, i.e. his own town, and those of St. Louis, where his presence, unfortunately for himself went shabbily unnoticed!".

It is also worth noting that, in the first modern Olympic Games, only men and amateur athletes took part. One of the basic Principles of the modern Olympic Movement, Gender Equality, was not mentioned in the first Charter of the IOC, a fact that proves indeed how the Movement has changed, slowly and yet substantially to evolve and adapt to the social requirements of each era.

### **Paris 1900: First disappointment**

Even though they initially raised a lot of expectations, from an organisational standpoint, the second Olympic Games was a failure. The newly-established IOC had to deal with the dislike and reluctance of the *Union de Sports Athlétiques* of France, which administered all sports in that country, to collaborate. The successful undertaking of the Games of Athens, where the entire event focused solely on the sporting sector, did not affect the French in the least, and they saw

the Olympic Institution as an opportunity for an international festival with many forms of spectacle. Additionally, the administrators of the Paris Exposition were neither particularly enthusiastic, nor gave the proper importance to the Olympic Movement and, in combination with the difficulty in finding venues to hold the sporting events, the Games were converted into a second-class spectacle, to the great disappointment of Coubertin. It is worth noting that no closing ceremony was held.

Coubertin made extensive efforts to salvage the prestige of the Games, but also to vindicate what must have been his own choice of Paris as the host city for the second modern Games. Unfortunately, however much he tried, he failed to convince Alfred Picard, secretary general of the Exposition, to allow him to organise "Olympic Games" instead of "some sports contest", which had been organised to take place as part of the Exposition. As Coubertin wrote, he should "*organise [the Games] ... through a private committee*" (Lennartz, 2010, p. 141). Coubertin had convinced diplomat Vicomte Charles de la Rochefoucauld to be President of that committee, hoping that he would offer important financial support.

A committee of 40 members was set up, but it was treated hostilely by the organisers of the Paris Exposition, who regarded it as their competitor and did everything in their power to hinder its work. As a result, the committee soon encountered difficulties and on 22 April 1899, Vicomte Charles de la Rochefoucauld resigned. On 19 February 1900, the organisers of the Paris Exposition appointed their own committee to organise sporting events, led by Daniel Mérillon. The only thing Coubertin achieved was "*the Games to be held during the Paris Exposition to be called the '1900 Summer Olympics' and to be considered equivalent to the organisation of the 'Games of the II Olympiad'*". Coubertin and the IOC had been completely excluded from the organisation of the event and the political intervention in the Movement was a fact.

The Games lasted from 24 May to 28 October (124 (!) days), while the Paris Exposition lasted 183 days. The opening and closing ceremonies of the Games did not take place, while the interest in the competition events was low. On 14 April, under the Eiffel Tower, the Paris Exposition opening ceremony was held in the presence of the French President Emile Loubet and other officials. Coubertin hoped that President Loubet would mention in his speech the Olympic Games that would take place in parallel with the Exposition but, to his great disappointment, not only did he not mention the slightest thing, but his presence as well as that of his wife have been completely ignored (Posey, 2000).



*"The long-running conflict that Pierre de Coubertin faced between ideology and reality, between his vision for the future and that of his contemporaries at home and abroad, was to persist long after the fragmented affair that passed for an Olympic Games in Paris. Indeed, many of the mistakes of 1900, worst of all involvement with a commercial exposition, were to plague the third Olympic Games. It seemed that the Frenchman's sporting altruism was damned"* Miller (2019, p. 45).

Despite some controversial and disappointing issues, it was in Paris where the increasing importance of the Games became obvious. Women made their first appearance, competing at croquet and lawn tennis, while the first professional athletes appeared in the fencing event. The number of Olympic sports doubled (from 9 to 18) and the participating countries almost did too (from 14 to 24), while the number of participating athletes quadrupled (from 241 to 997).

### **St. Louis 1904: Second disappointment**

The 4th IOC Session, held in Paris, in February 1900, selected the city of Chicago to host the third Olympic Games without a real opponent, as the representatives of the other American candidate city, St. Louis, did not arrive on time in Paris. The IOC refused to accept the request made by the St. Louis delegates to postpone the discussion of the matter, and thus, the Chicago representative, Henri Breal, convinced the IOC members of the success the 1904 Games would have, by submitting a draft budget of \$ 115.000.<sup>124</sup>

The IOC decision was enthusiastically received by the people of Chicago and several preparation committees were set up to ensure the success of the Games, which were scheduled to take place from 10 to 25 September 1904. The US President, William McKinley, who had assumed personal responsibility for the event, was assassinated on 14 September 1901, but his successor, Theodore Roosevelt, assured the organisers that he would continue to support the event with the same fervour, inviting Coubertin to declare the opening of the Games.

However, the city of St. Louis had not yet abandoned the idea of staging the Games. In the same year, it was decided that the Louisiana Purchase Exposition would take place. It was a major international exhibition, in the programme of which its organisers envisioned the inclusion of the Olympic Games. Following the announcement of the awarding of the Games to Chicago, the St. Louis organisers threatened to hold a similar sporting event in parallel with the Games. For this purpose, James Sullivan was appointed Chief of the Department of Physical Culture

<sup>124</sup> Minutes of the 4th IOC Session, 1901, Paris.

of the Exposition, as he had particular political power and personal connections with the President of the US. He had extensive experience in organising sporting events and, as Secretary-General of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), could have a decisive influence on where the best American athletes competed. Sullivan saw a new opportunity to host the Games and found an enthusiastic ally for his project, the Louisiana Purchase Exposition President, David Rowland Francis (Lennartz, 2010). As soon as the Chicago organisers learned of these plans, they strongly protested to Coubertin.

The transfer of the Games from Chicago to St. Louis was decided due to another event. The Chicago Organising Committee was behind schedule for the preparations and proposed to the IOC to postpone the Games until 1905. At the same time, President Roosevelt had openly expressed his support for St. Louis, allowing Coubertin to organise another vote for the host city, which took place on 23 December 1902. Of the 21 members who voted, 14 were in favour of St. Louis, 2 against and 5 abstained. On 12 February 1903, the Chicago Organising Committee received a telegram from Coubertin stating "the transfer was accepted" and on 7 March, the World's Fair Committee decided that the Games would be staged in the context of the St. Louis events. The political character of the Games was now very clear. But this time also, the organisers of the Exposition named all the events included in their programme as Olympic, thus creating confusion as to what was truly Olympic and what was not (Lennartz, 2010).

The great distance between the US and Europe prevented the mass participation in the Games by Olympic Committees of the old continent. Neo- Olympism had begun to take root in the European countries where it was born, and over time it acquired a Eurocentric character, which by its very nature would not be sufficiently assimilated, at least in the early years, by other social cultures.

Of the few athletes of the non-American teams, most could be counted on the fingers of one hand. It is characteristic that the Greek participation in the Games was limited to 14 athletes, of which only two had travelled from Greece, while others belonged to the local community of immigrants and took part in the Marathon in an effort to emulate Spyros Louis.

Charles Lucas (1905, p. 18), referring to the Greek participation in the Games, praised the contribution of Count Alexander Mercati (who had replaced Dimitrios Vikelas as a member of the IOC for Greece, when the latter withdrew from the IOC after the Athens Olympics ) and the high-mindedness he showed, by sending a letter to Sullivan, in which he explains the reasons that led his country to send athletes

to the Games: *"Greek athletes do not come to America with the expectation of winning all the trophies, but to meet their American colleagues and others from other nations and get to know them better. In this way, they will be able to return to Athens and Greece with the good fruits of this meeting and thus benefit their own country"*.

This commercial gathering was far from reflecting the Olympic Movement and Coubertin's vision that he saw coming true in Athens, in 1896! As in Paris, in 1900, it turned out that sport and business were not ideal partners. Once again, the Games were downgraded to the level of a trade fair, whatever its size. Coubertin's disappointment was evident, as was his dislike for Sullivan since their first meeting, in 1893, when, as a guest of the Princeton professor, he presented in his speech his theories and objectives, without impressing Sullivan and the other attendees.

It was obvious that the sporting altruism of the Frenchman was doomed by the introverted behaviour of the American organisers. The reality was harsh for Coubertin who, having sincerely expressed his admiration for American entrepreneurship and progress in the US, was unfairly betrayed by the hosts of the third Olympic Games.

### **London 1908: Steps forward**

The two Games before those in London, in 1908, proved to be a slow-burning bomb for the very existence of the Institution. Organised in the context of a World Exhibition, downgraded by an introspective vision imposed by internal political expediencies, they were found on the brink of disrepute, at Coubertin's great disappointment, since both Paris and St. Louis had been his personal choices and, nearly cost him the abandonment of his vision.

Despite these reversals, the idealists of that era that served the IOC, having completely embraced Coubertin's ideas, continued to hope that neo-Olympism could continue growing mainly on European ground, which is why it was not by chance that the subsequent five Olympiads would be hosted in European cities with a long history in sports. An important role in preserving the idea of the Games' revival, as a purely sports and cultural event, was undoubtedly played by the effort to return the Institution to Greece, in 1906. An event that was never officially recognised by Coubertin's IOC, but went down in the history of the Movement as the Intercalated Games. Most historians agree that these Games possibly saved Coubertin's vision from being lost (D. Young, 1996).

D. Young (2010, p. 47) considers that the Intercalated 1906 Games of Athens

were in reality an important milestone in the trajectory of the Olympic Movement, because they managed to return it to the right track: "...after two such fiascos, the Olympics might well have died in the cradle, if Greece had not come to the aid of the faltering institution. There had been an agreement, against Coubertin's wishes, that Athens should hold international Olympics in between the Games that moved around the world, as is the case nowadays with the winter Olympics. Greece was in no position to plan to hold these in-between Games in 1902, but in 1906 Athens hosted its second Olympic Games on the 10th anniversary of the first Games in 1896".

Llewellyn (2010, pp. 31-32) describes the situation that preceded these Games: "The 1906 Intermediate Games, or Intercalated Games as they are also known, were the by-product of a long series of political squabbles between Pierre de Coubertin and both the Greek royal family and leading Greek sporting officials. During the course of the inaugural Athens Olympic Games in 1896, the Greek hosts, led by King George I, began making plans to secure support to make Athens the permanent site of all future Olympic competition. Coubertin, fearing for his dream to hold the Olympic Games in various capitals and cultural centers of the world, immediately went on the offensive. In an article to *The Times*, the baron forcefully dismissed Greek attempts to monopolize the Games in their favour. A stance he also maintained during the 1896 IOC session, held in Athens. Demetrios Vikelas, the Greek-born IOC President at the time, attempted to reconcile the warring factions by proposing two separate series of Olympic competition that would be celebrated alternately between Athens and other major international cities on a two-year rotation".

Despite the insistence of the great historians of Olympism on the true nature of the 1906 Olympics, Coubertin's refusal to accept the Intercalated Olympics as real Olympic Games was also followed by his successors, until Jacques Rogge put an end to these efforts, in turn refusing to accept the inclusion of the 1906 Games in the official IOC agenda (Bijkerk, 2003).

It is characteristic that Theodore Andrea Cook (1908, p. 37), a member of the British Olympic Council, mentioned in his book *"The Olympic Games, London"*, published on the eve of the London Games, in 1908, that he took for granted the restaging of the "Greek Games" of 1906, as being indeed a "right" of the Greeks. He wrote, among other things: "No one interested in international sports and the ancient traditions of Athenian history could deny the modern Greeks the right to a series of their own Game; The Greeks will undoubtedly benefit from the

*international rules governing their staging and the agreements to be concluded in London. Of course, there should be no confusion with the authentic and, as it is said, official series of the Olympic Games, including those of London this summer; ... which means that the British Committee should prepare its athletes, immediately after the London Games, to travel to Greece for the 1910 Games".*

The great success of the first Athens Games, but also those of 1906, combined with the tragic failures of the Games in Paris (1900) and St. Louis (1904), must have alarmed Coubertin. He probably felt that the edifice of the universal Movement that he had envisioned, with its staging moving to different cities around the world every four years, was threatened by the carelessness of the two last editions' organisers. It may have occurred to him that a possible recognition of the 1906 Games would have two effects contrary to his view: (a) it would show the whole world that only Greece, with its history and the passion of its people, its proud people, could, in fact, carry out such a complex sporting and cultural event; and (b) even more dangerous, it would bring back for discussion the proposal of Vikelas and Mezo, for the establishment of the Intercalated Olympics permanently in Athens.

Young (2010) does not hesitate to make a serious critique of Coubertin's handling in general and of the effort he made to impose his personal choices, stressing with emphasis the decisive contribution of Greece to the entire structure of the revival and the fact that, if it were not for Soutsos, who set the chain of the Games in motion, and Zappas, along with Vikelas and Crown Prince Constantine, who both inspired and supported the first Games, perhaps none of what followed would have happened.

For the 1908 Games, the candidate cities were Berlin, Milan and Rome, with the latter prevailing and taking responsibility for their implementation. However, after the eruption of Mount Vesuvius, in 1906, and the financial costs incurred for its victims, the Italians asked the IOC to withdraw from the organisation of the Games, and the British agreed to stage them. However, once again for economic reasons, the Games would have to be held in the context of another major event, the Franco-British Exhibition. This time, the organisers of the Exhibition not only paid for the construction of the stadium and other infrastructure necessary for the Games, but also promised to return 50% of the gross receipts to the British Olympic Association.

Despite their long duration and their laid-back organisational structure, these Games are considered among the most successful. The interest of the Royal family in the success of the Games was obvious from their very first day. On the first

Sunday of the Games, at the religious service held at St. Paul's Cathedral, the Bishop of Pennsylvania in his sermon included a phrase that would become famous over time: *"The most important thing in these Olympics is not to win, but to participate"*. This phrase is incorrectly attributed to Coubertin, although he himself developed it further in his speech, during the reception given for the event by the then government of England, when he said: *"The important thing in life is not triumph, but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well"* (Miller, 2019, p. 53).

Unfortunately, the 1908 London Olympic Games were marked by intense nationalism, which also overshadowed the sports performances. There was a great rivalry between the Americans and the British, with the latter allowing the Irish to participate only under the British flag. The Russians, who were militarily, politically and diplomatically powerful at that time, demanded that the Finns participate under the Russian flag, which resulted in the view that the Finns do not have a flag of any kind.

As Matthews observes (1980, p. 40) *"...The Olympic Games of 1908, held in London, provided an international arena, in which the United States and Great Britain sought to establish athletic supremacy and thereby demonstrate the superior national vigour of each respective nation. The athletic competition resulted in serious and numerous confrontations between the American and British representatives. Indeed, the intensity of the controversy generated at London in 1908 between the Americans and British was clearly indicative of the athletic and cultural rivalry between the two nations. Paradoxically, the international confrontation in London was also a blessing in disguise for the Olympic Movement"*.

Some members of the IOC, especially the Americans and Germans, had reservations regarding the participation of different "British" teams (Great Britain, Canada, Australasia, South Africa). Some argued that if Britain sent that many teams, the German Empire could send Saxon, Bavarian etc. teams. Coubertin turned to the German member, Count von der Asseburg, for advice on the matter. Von der Asseburg declared that the German Empire would prefer a single British representation, but that it also understood the very special situation of Britain. Austria – which had been represented by an IOC member since 1905 – was concerned about Hungary and Bohemia. The IOC and the British Olympic Association agreed on a formula, the so-called Olympic geography of Coubertin: *"A region will be regarded as a 'country' if it is represented in the International Olympic Committee; where there is no such representation, any region under a single government will be regarded a 'country'."* Hence, Bohemia

and Finland could participate (Lennartz, 2010, p. 143). This arrangement, with some modifications, works to this day. Typical is the example of Taiwan and Hong Kong, which, despite the different political recognition given to them, as regions of China, they still have a separate NOC and participate in the Games. Apart of the above political tensions, another one took place, tarnishing the image of the Games: *"The American flag bearer, along with two other team members, all of Irish descent, refused to dip the flag as they passed in front of the stands that held the officials in the stadium and, looking at King Edward VII of England, shouted that this flag dips to no earthly king. To this day the American flag does not dip when passing in front of the officials. The British decided not to display the American flag above the stadium during the Opening Ceremony of the Games"* (Mallon & Buchanan, 1999, pp. 22-23).

To the great disappointment of Coubertin and the IOC the Games were completed with many disagreements and rivalries between countries and athletes. The positive side to these Games was that 37 women participated from four countries and competed at lawn tennis, archery and figure skating. After the ridiculous and farcical Games of 1900 and 1904, the Olympic Movement had progressed from infancy to young adulthood during the 1908 London Games, We may say that these controversial Games served in a way, as a vehicle for change and, more importantly, provided the impetus to restore a sense of dignity and credibility to the Olympic Movement, despite the nationalistic attitudes of some countries.

### **Stockholm 1912: Clouds around the Rings**

At no previous Olympiad had Coubertin needed to utilise his diplomatic skills to such an extent in order to calm down the various political interests and to avoid serious confrontations. After the negative experience of London, following the intense conflicts and rivalries between the US and England, the powerful Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), led by the chauvinist and ultra-conservative James Sullivan, threatened to boycott the Games if the American participation in their organisation was not guaranteed. Eventually, following various political manoeuvres, the Swedish NOC, in an effort to preserve the prestige of the Games and secure the maximum number of participants, allowed the presence of foreign representatives to assist in their organisation. Obviously, Sullivan was appointed representative of the US sports movement. The future IOC President Avery Brundage was among the members of the US team, whilst it is worth noting that this was also the first truly

representative delegation of the country, insofar as trials had been held for the selection of athletes who would qualify for the Olympic team.

The political disputes within the framework of the Games in Stockholm were too many, highlighting the issue of nationalism as one of the greatest problems of the Olympic Movement. The conflict in Austria-Hungary was apparent from the very first day of the Games, when Austria demanded from all athletes of Austria-Hungary to parade under the Austrian flag. This attempt, however, of demonstration of superiority on the part of Austria, caused the Hungarian athletes' reaction, who threatened to withdrawal from the Games. At the same time, Germany and Austria demanded that the Bohemian delegation should be excluded from the opening ceremony, since they refused to parade, as that was the case in London, under the Germany and Austrian flag. As it seemed impossible to unite the athletes of Bohemia and Austria, the latter requested the parade of the two teams to take place separately, but, still, under the Austrian flag.

Apart from this event, there was also a conflict between Russia and Finland. That was the time when Russia pursued the complete 'russianalization' of Finland, with the consequence to demand the exclusion of Finnish athletes from the Games if they did not parade under the Russian flag. It must be noted that as Bohemia as Finland had already been incorporated in the IOC, from its establishment, in which lifelong members of these States were included in its structure; Baron Reinhold Felix von Willebrand and Dr. Jiri Guth, respectively. Coubertin, not wishing to disappoint anyone, chose initially to allow the participation of the Bohemian and Finnish team separately from the Austrian and Russians ones. During the opening ceremony, the black and yellow flag of Austria was accompanied by a sign with the name of the country («Autriche») and the Austrian athletes and the Bohemian team followed with a sign titled "Austrian-Czech" («Autriche-Tchèque»). The Finnish team paraded separately from the Russian, but under the same flag.

Nevertheless, as Lennartz (2010, pp. 138-145) notes, *"...during the parade at the opening ceremony, there was an "irregularity". When the Finnish team entered the field, the head of the delegation instructed the athletes to walk slowly, taking very small steps. When they passed the area reserved for dignitaries, the Finnish athletes changed from a walk to the Björneborgarnas (Porilaistenmarssi), a military march used by the Pori Regiment, which was founded in 1627, during the Thirty-Year War, when the largest part of Finland belonged to Sweden. The Swedish public immediately understood the political connotations and enthusiastically applauded the Finnish athletes. The Russian team considered this act to be a*



*political challenge and threatened to abandon the Games. The Swedish organisers apologised to the Russian representatives and explained that the head of the band simply made a mistake. However, it is certain that this movement had been suitably rehearsed and arranged beforehand”.*

In an effort to alleviate the political conflicts within the IOC, right after the 1912 Stockholm Games, Coubertin decided to use the French alphabet for the inscription of the IOC members' names on the second page of the *Revue Olympique*, placing the names of Dr Jiri Guth and Baron Reinhold Felix von Willebrand under the Austrian and Russian ones! This move was not really of great importance, since the maintenance of the Bohemian and Finnish members recognized openly the distinctive presence of their countries in the Olympic Movement.

The political conflicts between Bohemia and Austria, as well as between Finland and Russia might have found a solution to the issue of all the delegates' participation in the Games in a separate way and be considered as Coubertin's personal success, but it had a temporary nature. On the occasion of the IOC anniversary for the 20 years since its creation, a festive Session took place in Paris, in 1914, in which the participation's right in the Games was discussed thoroughly, in view of Coubertin's decision regarding the Bohemian and Finnish participation in the Stockholm Games, even if they belonged politically to other States. Following Germany's suggestion, it was decided that only the politically recognized States would have the right to take part in the Games. This decision questioned directly the theory of "Olympic Geography" introduced by Coubertin with the revival of the Games, which was the IOC's distinctive feature and was absolutely different from the regulations of the political organizations. As a result, Bohemia and Finland would not be able, in the future, to take part in the Games as parts of a recognized State; a fact that actually disappointed Coubertin, who did not publish the Session's proceedings, arguing that he was prevented from the break of war (Lennartz, 2016).

During the IOC Congress, on 28 June 1914, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne was assassinated in Sarajevo, and World War I broke out.

The minutes of the above Congress were never published! Why Coubertin did not publish the minutes of this Congress? What really happened in the 1914 meetings? Were the decisions forgotten or did Coubertin change IOC policy during or after the war, cancelling in that way many decisions reached in the Paris Congress? (Krüger, 1997). Questions that were never answered...

## 19. The Inter-Wars Olympiads

### **Antwerp 1920 - Paris 1924 - Amsterdam 1928 – Los Angeles 1932 - Berlin 1936**

The Games organised during the period between the wars did not provide opportunities for the serious political exploitation of sport at an international level except, for the last event in Berlin, where Nazi Germany pushed the Olympic Movement to its limits. Not only because the catastrophic results of the World War I had severely damaged all levels of society, thereby preventing European citizens from addressing issues other than their own immediate survival, but also because the purely amateur character of sport (at the time) left no room for promoting elite sports. The economic crisis that hit most countries during the Interwar period, and especially the US, in 1929, inevitably contributed significantly to the suspension of any idea of supporting sport in the afflicted societies. On the contrary, it could be argued that, during this period there was a significant attempt to erode the components of sport, particularly within the European States.

Despite the serious difficulties faced by European sport as a whole, Coubertin and his colleagues did not stop supporting and promoting the Movement and the Games in every way. It is characteristic that, even when the war had begun to develop dangerously on both the East and West fronts by the German and Austro-Hungarian forces, Coubertin still hoped that Berlin would organise the Games in 1916! The Great War left behind millions of dead, broken societies, bankrupt economies and outdated political systems.

In contrast to the limited exploitation of sport by politicians in the international arena, the new political and ideological trends that developed during the Interwar period, largely used sport in order to convey their messages to the new emerging societies within each State.

In addition to the political challenges that developed during this period, the IOC and the Olympic Movement were faced with a further complex challenge: the commercialisation of sport and, as a natural consequence, the introduction of sports professionals. For many decades after the Interwar period, the conflict between amateurism and professionalism in the Olympic environment divided the world of sports and even the members of the IOC. It was not until the '80s that this problem was resolved with the arrival of the Diplomat - President of the IOC Samaranch, who, wisely opted to save the Movement by adopting a modern engagement with sport, rather than being swept away by ideologies from the past. Possibly, according to authors view, if Coubertin had lived in the '80s, he would have made the same decisions.

During the Interwar period, the Olympic Movement was forced to include one more fact of global development. The eurocentric character of the Movement and the figures that composed it, began to change radically. White sports excellence began to be challenged by a new generation of athletes from regions and colonies in Africa and Asia, which in the following decades began to gradually but steadily gain their independence, beginning with the Interwar period.

In the '20s, China, the Philippines and Japan sent their first athletes to the Games, and Japan won its first medals. Egypt made its Olympic debut without any direct colonial control. India, where the forces of nationalism and self-government were growing, acquired a distinct identity in the Games and Latin American football began to shine in the world and in the Games. Despite the multifaceted set of ideological and political challenges, the Games remained the dominant sporting spectacle worldwide (Goldblatt, 2018).

In this new political environment, the Olympic Movement had to unfold its virtues and continue its worldwide presence by supporting the vision of Coubertin, who, after serving for a time in the French army, returned to the post of President of the IOC, which he held until 1925.

### **Antwerp 1920: Is “punishment” among Movement’s prerogatives?**

The staging of the 1916 Games had been awarded to Berlin, the capital of the German Empire at the time – but they never took place, as World War I broke out in 1914 – in fact during the IOC Congress in Paris. At the end of the War, Europe had been politically transformed and the Olympic Movement tried to survive in this new environment by reorganising its structure and with a view to expanding further.

As early as 1915, when, for greater security, it was decided to move the IOC headquarters to Lausanne, Switzerland, the US had proposed to Coubertin to choose a city between Chicago, Cleveland, Newark, New York, Philadelphia and San Francisco to organise the 1916 Games. Coubertin’s response was negative, showing his devotion to the Principles he consistently served: *“...the IOC has no right to withdraw the Olympic Games from the country to which they were entrusted without the country itself being questioned. The VI Olympic Games remain in Berlin, although they are unlikely to take place. In ancient times, there were times when the Games could not be celebrated, but they never ceased to exist”* (Miller, 2019 p. 67).

In the ruins left by World War I, the IOC elected to organise the 1920 Olympic Games in Antwerp, in honour of the citizens of Belgium, who had suffered so

extensively during the period of the war, indicating symbolically that the Olympic Spirit remained strong. Despite de Coubertin's efforts to invite the Central Powers (Germany, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey), which had started the war to the Games, in order to give the appearance that the Games represent peace and are inclusive in nature, in the end these were excluded from the event. This decision was contrary to the Values of the Olympic Movement but, following the devastation the host country had experienced, nobody was interested in considering whether or not this decision was correct (Lennartz, 1998).

The author, however, is of the opinion that such major, subversive events in the international situation may justify a departure from the basic principle of non-politicisation of the Games, with the view that coexistence, in the Olympic Village and the sports fields, of athletes and players from countries that had just recently experienced the hardships of a war between them, would create an unpleasant and potentially dangerous climate, as opposed to what usually exists in such a celebration of sport and culture.

At that time, women did not have equal rights with men, nor even the right to vote. The male-dominated IOC may have functioned in a climate of conservatism, but at the same time it constituted a radical example of an organisation that accepted women, even if only in certain sports. The entire process was certainly slow, but progressively ever more women, from ever more countries, were taking part in the Games.

As decided at the IOC Olympic Congress, in 1914, these were the Games where the Olympic tradition of taking an athletes' oath at the opening ceremonies commenced and where the Olympic flag with its five interlinked rings appeared for the first time, symbolising the links between athletes from all continents.

The choice of Antwerp to host the VII Olympic Games proved to be completely successful. Women's participation in the Games increased rapidly, expressing a change in disposition in post war Europe.

### **Paris 1924: Beams of hope**

The resumption of the Games in Paris, 24 years after the tragic second Olympiad, which nearly ruined Coubertin's vision, was a challenge in itself! The reviver wished to host the Games in his lifetime in the city where his idea was born.

Miller (2019, p. 78), describes the complicated situation concerning the election of the city to host the 2024 Games: *"Nine cities, four in America and five in Europe, had lodged an interest in the Games of 1924 prior to the Session at Lausanne, in*

1921. It was Coubertin's ambition that the Games should return to Paris, under a more attractive guise than had been possible 24 years earlier. The lingering economic downturn following the war would make it difficult for European teams to cross the Atlantic, yet sport itself was expanding rapidly throughout European nations, especially with the development of individual sports' world championships. With clandestine negotiations, de Coubertin managed to establish a mood in which Amsterdam, one of the contenders, would be assured of the 1928 Games, if Paris were to be elected for 1924. This he achieved, with the United States and Netherlands strongly supporting Paris, for which Aristide Briand, the French prime minister, promised substantial financial backing. Thus, for the first time two future sites were elected simultaneously". The second time came much later, in 1971, when the IOC decided to elect simultaneously Paris for the 2024 and Los Angeles for the 2028 Games.

Recalling the very bad experience of 1900, the members of the Organising Committee of the 1924 Paris Olympic Games did their best to ensure the success of the Games. The number of women doubled (from 65 to 135) and the number of participating countries increased significantly (from 29 to 44). In the absence of Germany (once again) and the new Soviet Union, the Games, from the very beginning, seemed to respond to Coubertin's desire to present a true sporting festival. Austria, Hungary, Turkey, Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania, Ireland, Poland, Yugoslavia, Uruguay, Haiti, Ecuador, China and the Philippines made their first appearance at the traditional parade of delegations. The Olympic Movement had finally begun to show its international character, departing from its original European framework.

Of course, the political exploitation of the Institution, albeit to a limited extent, was not absent. The French Foreign Ministry took direct control of much of the organisation, securing a budget of 20 million francs and completely refurbishing the Olympic stadium - the Stade de Colombes - and building a magnificent art-nouveaux swimming complex. As it became more and more common, international politics and domestic economic problems seemed to threaten the hosts from the eve of the Games. The international crisis that followed the French occupation of Ruhr, in 1923, and the severe flooding of Paris that winter, raised doubts as to whether the organisers would be able to cope with the demands of the Games, to the point where Coubertin made discreet contacts with Los Angeles, in order to find out if this American city could host the Games in the event that Paris could not stage them (Goldblatt, 2018).

Coubertin, however, was once again disappointed: the French spectators proved to be lacking in sports education, as they often behaved badly, heckling during the

national anthems and quarrelling in the stands. He also had to deal with the issue of professionalism in sports, which seemed to concern the scholars of that time. The reviver had begun to realise that the Movement was growing “dangerously” and was vulnerable to deviations that would call it into question.

### **Amsterdam 1928: High sporting culture**

Having expressed interest several times in the past in organising an Olympiad, Holland finally undertook to organise the 1928 Games in Amsterdam. As in the past, the basic issue that the Organising Committee had to face was the financial burden of the organisation. After failed efforts to fund the event through a lottery and the use of other creative methods, the solution was provided by several wealthy Dutch of the West Indies and several communities throughout Holland, who rallied around the Olympic ideals and offered significant sums of money. Throughout all this procedure the domestic Press assisted greatly, constantly calling for support. All this social and economic assistance provided by thousands of people and groups indicates the social contributions of sport and of the Olympic Games in particular.

From a political interference standpoint, nothing of note happened at the Games. Conversely, they have gone down in history as uneventful, without tensions, but with a high-level sporting culture. Only certain religious protests were made against the Institution, which did not tarnish the excellent organisation.

Finally, in Amsterdam the decision was taken to change the order of appearance of the delegations in the parade during the opening ceremony, with Greece always leading it and the host country entering the stadium last.

### **Los Angeles 1932: A different view of the Games**

The choice of Los Angeles as the city to host the Games of the X Olympiad was another major challenge for the very existence of the Institution. All but one of the previous events were awarded to European cities, not always with the best result. The unsuccessful editions of Paris (1900) and London (1908) were evidently a major concern about the substance of the Games and the messages conveyed through them by Coubertin’s neo-Olympism. The only attempt to stage the Games in a city outside Europe, in order to emphasise the universality of the institution, was in St. Louis, US; a test which also proved to be another fiasco, to the great disappointment of Coubertin. However, in spite of these disruptions, the events that followed have, to a large extent, restored confidence in the Institution, which was gradually modernising and growing, also attracting the interest of countries outside Europe.

The great risk of awarding the 1932 Games to Los Angeles had little to do with the tragic experience of St. Louis, which revealed a specific and somewhat arrogant attitude of Americans towards Europeans, but rather with the economic situation in the US after the Great Wall Street Crash, in 1929. The IOC was more concerned about the distance that separated the city from Europe, a fact which would undoubtedly constitute a deterrent to the large participation of athletes from all over the world.

William M. Garland, a self-made wealthy realtor, member of the IOC since 1922, who had been appointed head of the Olympic bid and later head of the Organising Committee, managed to convince the IOC members at the Rome General Assembly, in 1923, that Los Angeles would be ready to host the Games of the X Olympiad. It should be noted that Los Angeles had also bid for the 1924 and 1928 Games, without success. This time, his proposal aroused the interest of the IOC members, but any formal bid for the Games had to be submitted through the appropriate channels, in this case the US NOC. The members of the Olympic Committee tried to discourage Garland, arguing that it was unlikely that an American city would be awarded the Games, let alone Los Angeles, given the distance that separated it from the rest of the world. Participants would have to travel at least one week by boat to cross the Atlantic and then make a journey of several days to cross the North American continent. Many of the IOC members in European countries opposed the choice of Los Angeles because of the high cost of travel, but with the help of Coubertin, in May 1923, Garland secured the X Olympiad for his city (Riess, 1981, p. 53).

Despite the reduced presence of international athletes, the Games were a success. What was especially positive in the Games was the complete lack of involvement of politics. Everything was organised and executed by the private sector, contrary to previous Games that depended completely on the State. In contrast with the approach of sports in fascist Italy and as of 1933 in Germany, the US government did not dictate the country's policy in sport. For example, in those Games, there were few government figures, whilst there was no financial support from President Hoover who, having in mind how the American people had borne the brunt of the post-War Depression and the economic crisis, in 1929, as well as the upcoming elections, did not honour the Games with his presence. He left the US sports stakeholders and ideologists to continue to do the work of disseminating the supremacy of the US republic through sports (Young, 2005).

Strange as it may seem, it is clear that, at that point in time, sports in the US had not yet become an object of political exploitation, without, of course, this meaning

that social forces in the US did not exploit sports to promote the American democracy as the model political system of the West.

At first glance, it is difficult to find two Games that are as different from each other as those of Los Angeles in 1932 and Berlin in 1936 that followed. The first were funded by one man and the private sector, without any serious support from any level of the US government. The local government of California allowed the issuance of a one million bond loan and got its money back, while local businesses put in the money to build the famous Coliseum, which would serve as the main Olympic Stadium for the Games (Goldblatt, 2018). On the contrary, the Berlin Games were fully supported by State funding and used entirely for State and ideological propaganda. It was now clear that the use of the Games as a tool of political propaganda on all sides of the political spectrum, having already begun in the late '20s, would preoccupy scholars of Olympism for many years to come. One particularly important issue that preoccupied the IOC during those Games was defining the concept of amateur sportsmanship. The problem had first been spotted in the 1924 Games, along with the issue of compensating athletes for the lost working hours during the Games. After Amsterdam, the entire discussion had started to take on very great importance and the IOC attempted to designate somewhat more specifically who had the right to participate in the Games and who did not. Despite this, the traditional meaning of amateurism did not suffice to cover the new needs of participants, and this remained a fundamental criterion for participation in the Games. After a series of negotiations and attempts, the IOC took a stand against direct payments to athletes, but in 1930, at its Session in Berlin, it left a window open, adopting the "compensation for loss of wages" (Llewellyn & Gleaves, 2014).

*"Two organisational innovations were introduced at those Games: The medal award ceremony (today we have the triple podium and the playing of the national anthem) and the separate reception and accommodation area for athletes, known today as the Olympic Village"* (Goldblatt 2018, p. 157).

The first genuine Olympic Village consisted of 550 prefabricated wooden houses and was built on an area of 101 acres in Baldwin Hill, on the outskirts of the city. This led to the revival of the last component of Coubertin's *"modern Olympia"* transforming simple dwellings into urban houses. William Garland, political leader of Los Angeles and head of the Organising Committee, was probably the first to realise the potential benefits from the Games for the Olympic city. Under his guidance, Los Angeles prepared a list of new facilities, including the 105,000-seat Memorial Coliseum, a swimming complex and a fenced-in stand. All of the above were con-



structed in an area of 160 acres, which was once an exhibition park and which would later become a recreation area. The Coliseum remained the largest Olympic stadium built until the Sydney Games in 2000 (Liao & Pitts, 2006).

There was no lack of problems in these Games either. Great Britain mistakenly paraded before Germany, and strong protests were voiced about this.

*"The spirit of Olympism and the cooperation among athletes, officials and fans during the Los Angeles Games could not have been better. However, the Olympics were soon destined to embark on a journey that would forever cast a dark shadow on Coubertin's dream. In the '30s, the world was undergoing radical change motivated largely by political ideology. Several leaders who emerged during this time would use all means to advance specific political and social agendas. The Olympic Games were not immune to such manipulation from forces outside the IOC. Indeed, politics became as much a part of the Olympic Games as athletes and sweat" (Mechikoff 2014, p. 333).*

### **Berlin 1936: The defeat of a major ideological provocation**

As they had grown so much in size and in estimation, the Olympic Games no longer went unnoticed by the political leaders, who attempted to promote their political positions in any manner possible. Many changes had taken place in the world, propelled by different ideologies, which attempted to degrade the Olympic Ideals and transform the Games into a vehicle for propaganda. The start of this new trend were the Berlin Games.

The introversion that characterised the IOC throughout the interwar period did not allow it to foresee the danger of sport being used by politics, which was already at its door. Following the cancellation, due to the war, of the 1916 Games, which were scheduled to take place in Berlin, Germany returned and requested to organise the 1936 Games in the same city, based on the new and literally unstable central coalition of the Weimar Republic, under Chancellor Heinrich Brüning. Berlin won the bid over Barcelona for these Games, at the 29th IOC Session, on 26 April 1931, in Berlin, after Rome and Budapest withdrew their candidacy, stating their intention to return in the future.

The threat was obvious, since Nazism did not hide its intentions, as was evident from the statements made by the representative of the party Bruno Malitz a year after the award, who did not hesitate to condemn modern sport because, as he claimed, it was *"infested with Frenchmen, Belgians and Jew-Niggers"*!

Shortly afterwards, Karl Ritter von Halt, member of the IOC in Germany since

1929, under pressure from his colleagues, asked the National Socialist Party of Adolf Hitler to clarify its position in view of the forthcoming elections in Germany about the issue of hosting the Games and received the following answer: *"...the German National Socialist Party will not create difficulties in organising international competitions such as the Olympic Games, nor will it oppose the participation of black athletes in the Games"*. Von Halt sent a copy of this message to the IOC, whose doubts seemed to be reassured, even though things seemed to the contrary. Only perceptive people realized that the assurances they received were anything but true (Miller, 2019, p. 104).

Nazi Germany was the first nation to seize the opportunity to hold the Olympic Games in order to show its power as a nation to the whole world and its philosophy regarding the Aryan race. As Pitsoula (2004, p. 1) observes: *"...Goebbels convinced Hitler that the Games were a magnificent opportunity for promoting their ideology, stressing that ...the Games were more important than 30 military divisions!!!"*. [...] *"Hitler perceived the Olympic Games as a socio-political platform, through which he would contrive to exhibit the superiority of the Aryan race to the world"*. Starting in the '30s, the Nazis organised National Socialist sport meets similar to those of the Ancient Greece, in which only members of the Aryan race could take part. When Hitler became Chancellor in 1933, he immediately passed a general anti-Semitic law, which, among other things, barred Jews and people of colour from exercising in the sports facilities of the various clubs, as well as from participating in sports competitions with teams from the Aryan race (Kass, 1976).

Talentino (2016, p. 8), describing the pre-Games political situation in Germany notes: *"...Nazi ideology originally disdained the Olympics because of Coubertin's explicit connection between peaceful competition and goodwill and the absence of racial or political distinctions in his rhetoric. Indeed, "the Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte decried the Olympics as 'artificial and mechanical' [an enterprise] whose chief political consequence is the enhancement of Bolshevism's war against the white race. But a clear connection existed between Nazi conceptions of the master race and the opportunity to demonstrate mastery that the Olympics presented"*.

Hitler was therefore persuaded to view the Games as a showcase event, and he authorised extensive funding from the government to provide for *"monumental construction and political theatre"*. Moreover, as controversy mounted abroad over Nazi anti-Semitism, he made non-substantive but visible adjustments to make Germany appear less hostile to the rights of Jews, such as removing anti-Jewish signs and inviting a few to try out for the German team. The IOC also forged what Albert

Senn describes as a link in its "*chain of myths*" about the Games by insisting, for the first but not last time, that the Games are awarded to a city, not a State, and thus make no statement about the political behaviours of that State.

Preparations for Berlin had commenced in 1932, when the President of the German Olympic Committee, Dr Theodor Lewald, and Carl Diem, the most renowned athletic historian of the age, were sent to Los Angeles to observe the Games up close in order to organise and run the Games in Berlin, with their sole target to organise the best Games of all times. Both were so involved in organising the Games, which they had undertaken to organise in 1916, but which had not taken place due to World War I, that they did not place any particular importance on the Nazi dogma and the reasons underlying hosting the Games. After great effort, they managed to create the most complete sporting facilities that had existed until then and, from a material and organisational standpoint, the Berlin Games were the best organised of all time. The pinnacle of Nazi attempts to showcase their excellence and the superiority of their race was the construction of a massive 16-tonne bell.

Following the imposition of their anti-Semitic legislation, the Germans received a host of negative comments. On the other side of the Atlantic, the participation or not of the US was the subject of a major debate. In contrast to many of his compatriots, who were fully opposed to it because of Germany's anti-Semite policy, Avery Brundage, the President of the American Athletic Union and later President of the IOC, was passionately in favour of the participation of the US team. The AAU voted in favour of boycotting the Games if the Nazis did not change their anti-Semitic policy and constantly put off accepting the German invitation. Finally, in June 1934, the German Olympic Committee reported that 21 Jewish athletes had been nominated to participate in the German training camps. However, the majority of the Americans had serious doubts and only after a visit by Avery Brundage himself to Germany and his assurance that the Germans were following to the letter the rules of Olympism, did the AAU allow American athletes to participate in the Games (Kass, 1976).

Driven by a large group of colleagues, not including those representing the IOC in Germany who were at the mercy of national propaganda, the then IOC President, De Baillet-Latour, was unable to understand the German policy on the subject.

In August 1935, the member of the IOC in the US, General Charles H. Sherrill, a well-known anti-communist with anti-Semitic views, met Hitler during a tour of Europe and discussed with him the assurances given by the National Socialist Party, in 1933, about the Jewish participation in the Games. The Fuhrer told him that this could only apply to the composition of the guest teams, but not to the participa-

tion of German Jews in the German team. When Sherrill warned him of the danger of withdrawing the Games from Berlin, Hitler told him that in this case the Games would simply be called the *"German Olympic Games"*. Sherrill suggested to Baillet-Latour that he should meet Hitler in person and clarify the issue. This suggestion became even more imperative when Hitler, with the Nuremberg Laws, described the Jews as *"sub-humans"* and they were brutally persecuted.

The situation in Germany also had an impact within the IOC. Ernest Jahncke, the second member of the IOC in the US, remained unconvinced by De Baillet-Latour's assurances of a change in German government policy. The President of the IOC, particularly dissatisfied with Jahncke's doubts, accused him of *"going over the limit"*, a view which, he claimed, was shared by the Honorary President Coubertin! De Baillet-Latour accused Jahncke of being a traitor and called for him to resign, saying: *"you have also misled the public at large, which is not aware that you know very little of Olympic things and nothing at all about the XI Olympiad's problems, as you have never been present at any meeting of the Committee"* (Miller, 2019, p. 105).

Finally, in June 1934, the German Olympic Committee announced that, in response to the requirements of the IOC, it had proposed 21 Jewish athletes to participate in the German training centres. Nevertheless, the majority of Americans had serious doubts about the sincerity of the Germans and only after Avery Brundage himself visited Germany and gave assurances that the Germans were following the rules of the Olympic Movement to the letter, the AAU accepted the participation of American athletes in the Games (by a narrow majority of only 3 votes out of 114 members). Jahncke, who was considered a traitor by his colleagues in the IOC, was asked to resign, but refused. The IOC's blind and unwavering confidence in the German right to host the Games led to a unanimous decision by the 49 members to expel Jahncke before the Berlin Games (Miller, 2019, p. 106).

Despite the fact that Spain and France boycotted the Games in protest of the Germans' racist policies, on 1 August 1936, the Opening Ceremony of the X Modern Olympic Games was held in a crowded stadium, with athletes from 49 countries participating and with triple the number of women than in the previous Games. This was the first time a Torch relay was held to relay the Sacred Flame of Ancient Olympia, in which more than 3,000 relay runners took part. Although the Germans won the most medals, the superstar of the Games was Jesse Owens, an African American, who won the 100 and 200 metre races, the long jump and the

4x100m relay. Despite the criticism he had received at home for consorting with white women, which at the time was a great taboo, and the monetary assistance he had received from the University of Ohio, where he was a student (which he was consequently forced to return), he participated in the Games with great success. The friendship he developed with German Luz Long, his main rival in the long jump, is a wonderful example that, irrespective of political differences between countries, on the playing field everyone is equal and everyone strives to achieve the best possible performance.

Artur Takac, a great Olympic personality and close advisor to Samaranch, notes in his book (1998, p. 31): *"...When Owens and Long shook hands on the Olympic podium, that was not the end of their friendship. In fact, the depth of their tie was seen immediately as they jogged around the track together after the competition had finished. Long was not trying to steal Owens's limelight, but knew that if the black American had been on his own, there might well be those in the crowd – there were many Nazi groups – who might be less than sporting in their reception of this champion. But with the blond Lutz Long at his side, everyone had the chance to cheer and roar their approval; I suspect that the majority were applauding a great sporting competition and a great champion".*



*Luz Long and Jesse Owens: All the Values of Olympism together in practice!*

Regarding what was being discussed about German policy and US participation in the Games, Jesse Owens later stated: *"I wanted no part in politics. And I wasn't in Berlin to compete 'against' any one athlete. The purpose of the Olympics, anyway, was to do your best. As I'd learned long ago from Charles Riley at school, the only victory that counts is the one over yourself. I prepared for this moment for eight years. One mistake could ruin it all. So why worry about Hitler? When we stood on the starting line for the 100m final, I knew that in ten seconds my life could change for ever"* (Miller, 2019, p. 110).

The myth that Hitler refused to congratulate Owens due to the colour of his skin is widespread and yet false. What actually happened was that he refused to congratulate coloured athletes Cornelius Johnson and David Albritton, who had won gold and silver medals at the high jump on the previous day.<sup>125</sup> What is, however, true, is that both then President of the US, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the next President, Harry Truman, failed to invite Owens to the White House to congratulate him, nor did they even send him a congratulatory letter. Nineteen years would go by before he was invited to the White House by Dwight Eisenhower, who sought to honour his achievements. These events indicate how oftentimes successful athletes, despite their international achievements, are nevertheless victims of racism and small-minded political differences.<sup>126</sup>

Towards the end of the Games, during a dinner hosted by Hitler, De Baillet-Latour found himself sitting next to von Schirach's wife, who remarked on how well "the great Festival on Youth, Peace and Reconciliation" was going. The IOC President, obviously saddened by what had happened (contrary to what he apparently believed some time ago) and with an unexpected prediction replied: *"May God preserve you from your illusions, madame! If you ask me, we shall have war in three years"* (Miller, 2019, p. 107).

Senn (1999, p. 63), wonders: *"...Are the Berlin Games a distortion of the Olympic Games' ideals? Probably only in theory, one might say. In practice, violent government intervention could be seen as something new, but only in terms of its size, not as something new in the Games. In 1896, the Greek government fully understood the usefulness of exploiting the world's appeal to such a sporting event. The Belgians and the Allied Powers certainly used the Antwerp Games for their own purposes. Nevertheless, the hopes of the IOC that the Games could have a cultural influence on the Nazi racist policies were part of a fantasy, since the Nazis*

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125 <http://hnn.us/articles/571.html>

126 <https://www.thoughtco.com/did-hitler-really-snub-jesse-owens-4064326>

*took advantage of the Games for their own purposes. After the Games ended, the IOC officials had forgotten the Nazi policies of the German Government, even when they led to the destruction of the Jewish communities throughout Europe and the supporters of Olympism included their positive memories of Berlin in their own realm of myths”.*

## **20. The Olympiads of the New World...**

### **London 1948 - Helsinki 1952 - Melbourne 1956 - Rome 1960 - Tokyo 1964**

The Berlin Games marked the Olympic Movement in various ways. Many believe that they were a setback to Coubertin's vision. The unbridled politicisation of the Games by the Nazis and their loose approach by the IOC paved the way for the invasion of politics in the Games in a way that was absolute and decisive for the continuity of the institution. Despite this effectively correct approach, there are not a few who believe, within the general ideological context of the Movement, that the Berlin Games did not offer more to politics than they did, perhaps on a smaller scale, in previous Olympics. On the contrary, in the author's opinion, through these completely politicised Games, the Movement finally managed to: a) strengthen its ideological basis, and in particular as regards the conflict with racism, with the presence in the Games and the spectacular predominance of the black athlete Jesse Owens, b) avoid an imminent boycott, with the large participation of States; and c) maintain, albeit with great difficulty, its unity in the face of divisive voices loudly threatening the fragmentation of the IOC, at a critical juncture in its history. It will face similar challenges in the future resulting from more intense pressures and ideological conflicts. At that time, the battle against the political exploitation of the Games was uneven; something that will become apparent later, after World War II, with the creation of the two major political blocs, East and West, and the emergence of new States and civilisations.

All Olympiads that took place from 1948 until 1988 could be called “The Cold War Olympiads” due to the excessively demonstrated rivalry in all sports competitions between the US, representing the capitalist West, and the USSR, representing the communist East! Inserting cynical political attitudes into the sports fields, became the prime target of both ends, creating an atmosphere of extreme nationalism that could destroy completely Coubertin's vision.

As Rider observes (2016, pp. 29-30), “...Many observers in the Western world hoped that the participation of Stalin's athletes in the Olympics would lessen the

*tensions of the Cold War and introduce the Soviet Union to ideas on fair play and good sportsmanship. In the months leading to Helsinki, however, others could see darker issues at stake. {...} But if there is anything, we know about modern international sport it is that it is a cultural practice fraught with contradictions and double standards. The international sporting system, within which the Olympics reside, emerged in the nineteenth centuries as a force of peace and goodwill. It also grew in strength and global popularity because it was built into the Olympic Movement, but they were not the first to do so, nor would they be the last”.*

The Games that followed World War II could be described as the Avery Brundage Games. The controversial American IOC President (1952-1972), with a long athletic career, President of the powerful US Amateur Athletic Union and later President of the US Olympic Association and Committee, became a member of the IOC in 1937, replacing the expelled Ernest Jahncke. Brundage had a strong personality and was obsessed with the pure concept of neo-Olympism, as presented by Coubertin in the late 19th century. He quickly managed to impose his personal agenda on the Olympic Movement, from his very first steps in the domestic and international sports scene, many years before he took on the leadership of the IOC. A fan of sports, a fanatical advocate of amateurism and the separation of sport and politics, he was also overly conservative, anti-communist and anti-Semitic. This ideological blend of positive and negative characteristics of his personality helped him to lead the Olympic Movement for 20 years, without losing his authenticity.

For defenders of amateurism in sport and its non-interference with politics, Brundage has been a successful President; but for those who believe that sport, like other forms of social action, is offered as a convenient platform for promoting ideological, political, social views and / or commercial interests, Brundage left a negative mark on the Movement. Luckily, this conflict of positions appeared in the first 20 years of the Cold War and was still manageable and not in the second, where the unbridled political exploitation of the Games with boycotts and rising professionalism in sport threatened the Movement dangerously. There, the presence of a selfish and obsessive President in the IOC leadership, such as Brundage, would have most likely led the Movement to another level of conflict, with questionable results. There was a need for a diplomatic, realistic and effective President who, for the good of the Movement, was found in the person of Samaranch.

However, the truth is that Brundage's obsession with separating sport from politics has been for him a huge alibi for many of his actions, which, under other circumstances, could involve the Movement in endless theoretical discussions



and ideological conflicts, far from the essential goals of Olympism. His strong personality had managed to impose many of his positions in the operation of the IOC, at least 20 years before he was elected President, in 1952. Among the positive achievements of his presidency are included: a) the return to the Olympic Family of Russia, as the USSR now, b) keeping discreetly the Olympic Movement out of the Cold War, c) his relaxed attitude towards South Africa and Rhodesia, which were finally barred for many years because of their governments' racist policies in the field of sport; d) the opening of the Institution to the Third World, with the approach of the new countries emerging from the liberation movements in Africa; e) tackling the phenomenon of promoting ideological positions through the Games; and f) his determination against terrorism, which struck the Institution in Munich, in 1972.

*"What everyone admits, however, is that by leaving the IOC, he left behind an Institution in constant development both organisationally and economically, albeit threatened by external pressures and internal frictions"* (Senn 1999, p. 68).

The five Games, which took place until 1968, could also be described as the Games that have enabled the Movement to spread to two other continents, allowing it to expand its objectives to other cultures and societies. International politics, of course, has always been present, not so much by influencing the organisation from within, but by creating a toxic environment, in which the Games had to preserve their authenticity.

### **London 1948: Consequences of a war**

Following the end of World War II and the cancellation of back-to-back Olympiads (in 1940 and 1944), on the year that the war ended the IOC decided to hold the 1948 Games in London. In order to tackle the needs of that period, stringent austerity measures had been imposed on Great Britain, which was attempting to rebuild after the war, as London in particular suffered terrible bombing from the Germans. This made Londoners less than enthusiastic that their city would have to spend a significant sum in organising the Games.

At that point in time, the major political forces had begun to separate into West (US and its allies) and East (Communist/Socialist USSR and its allies), with the most obvious result of this conflict being the division of Berlin into West and East, a fact that revealed the very delicate balances that had to be maintained so that another great war did not break out.

At the same period, Great Britain chose to withdraw its forces from Palestine, which was being fought over by the Jews and the Arabs. There were also several

references regarding the violation of human rights and basic liberties under communist regimes. The Western fear that communism would spread continuously increased, as Chinese communists began to expand into the British colonies of South-eastern Asia (Malay and Singapore). These developments resulted in very sparse coverage of the Games by the Press.

During the 1948 London Games there were no major political rivalries, but it is worth noting that the newly-formed State of Israel sent a delegation consisting of one single female athlete. Finally, she did not compete, following threats by the Arab States that they would boycott the Games if the Israeli athlete was accepted. Despite the fact that the threat to boycott the Games was not new, this was the first time a country was essentially barred from participating for this reason and, unfortunately, this was the start of a series of similar episodes throughout the Cold War.

Despite all the rumours about the end of the Olympic Games that Coubertin had envisaged, the IOC managed to rise to the occasion each time, to remain independent and to continue to organise the Games. The IOC's conviction that the Games constituted a means for better understanding and communication between different cultures and societies and, by extension, in order to achieve the ideal goal of World Peace, played a great part in this. As in the 1920 Antwerp Olympic Games, the aggressors in World War II (Germany and Japan) were barred from the Games (Martucci, 1988).

The problem that arose during the Cold War was that the various countries and groups of people who attempted to promote their political and social interests, instead of perceiving the Olympic Games as a means to promote the Values of Olympism, utilised them as a political vehicle to serve their own particular ends.

Given the proximity of the Games with the end of the war, the continuing redistribution of political influence in divided Europe and the occupation of Germany and Japan, the main concern of the foreign policy of England was to offer the defeated Axis powers a clear line of action. With regard to the exclusion of Germany from the Games, no question was raised. In contrast, with Japan things were different. Britain did not want this country to take part in the Games and hoped that the Allied Administration in Japan would refuse visas to those athletes who wanted to travel to participate.<sup>127</sup>

Nevertheless, the British Foreign Office was taken by surprise, in July 1948, when it came under great pressure from Japan for its athletes to participate in the Games.

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127 National Archives, FO 370/1594: L 3902/110/405 (June 1948).

The British Mediation Mission in Tokyo sent a telegram to the British Foreign Office stating that, in addition to the refusal of the Allied Administration in Japan to grant visas to Japanese athletes, there was also the 1946 decision by the IOC on the non-participation of this country (together with Germany) in the Games.<sup>128</sup>

As a result, at the 40th IOC Session, in Lausanne, in 1946, at the suggestion of the two IOC members, Prince Axel of Denmark and Dr A. E. Porritt of New Zealand, the IOC decided *"...the non-participation of the occupied countries (Germany and Japan) since they did not have a recognised government"*.<sup>129</sup> However, what the British did not take into account, nor reported by the IOC, was that, at its next 41st Session, in Stockholm, in 1947, the Committee admitted that *"the Olympic Committee of Japan still exists!"*<sup>130</sup> However, the official version on the subject is that expressed by Axel, that is, Germany and Japan were not invited to participate in the Games because they did not have legitimate governments to which the invitation could be sent (Miller, 2019, p. 118). Italy and Finland, on the other hand, participated regularly in the Games.

The USSR did not participate as, in the run-up to the Games, it had not been able to create a National Olympic Committee, despite efforts by the IOC and Britain to convince the communist government to do so. It should be noted that the overall USSR policy towards the Institution of the Olympic Games based on its own ideology was negative, as it expressed the *"bourgeois"* aspect of sports of the West (Beacom, 2012). This international isolation did not last much longer as, in 1951 it returned to the IOC fold as a full partner and in 1952 it sent a strong team of athletes to the 1952 Helsinki Olympic Games.

However, according to Beck (2012, pp. 21-43), *"...even though the USSR participation had been included in the commemorative programme of the Games, as one of the countries that was "expected to participate", its non-participation ended up being attributed to the fact that it was afraid of the negative publicity that would be given to it for not securing the first places in the Games. For the Soviet leadership, only winning the first places could justify their country's participation in international games! The absence of Soviet athletes gave the US the possibility to get more medals and to promote in this manner the quality of their own sports model"*.

It was then clear that the Cold War had begun to affect sports and hurt the

128 National Archives, FO 370/1594: L 4051/110/405 (July 1948).

129 Minutes of the 40th IOC Session (1976), Lausanne.

130 Minutes of the 41st IOC Session (1947), Stockholm.

Olympic Movement for the next 30 years. Minor political interferences in preceding Games gave way to a real battle of impressions between East and West. If, for some reason, the IOC should feel justified after the end of this brutally competitive period, it is that it managed to overcome the difficulties resulting from the political and ideological interferences of the two superpowers during that 30-year period, while preserving its unity.

### **Helsinki 1952: Newcomers in the international sports map**

After the end of World War II, the Swedish IOC President, Edström convinced Brundage that the communist countries should take part in the Games. Although athletes from the USSR did not compete in the 1948 London Games, several Soviet observers were present. In just two years, Soviet athletes achieved a major leap in performance, as seen in the European Athletics Championships, in 1950 (Miller, 2019).

The following year, the USSR received provisional recognition from the IOC, and Stalin unilaterally required the appointment of Konstantin Andrianov as a member of the IOC, which angered Edström, since the selection of its membership was the exclusive right of its members. After a series of negotiations, the initial refusal of the IOC to accept Andrianov's membership was followed by his admission, in 1951, thus breaking a long-standing procedural tradition of the organisation. Despite the reservations of some IOC members, the General Assembly, which convened in Vienna, accepted Andrianov, with 24 votes in favour (including that of Brundage), 5 against and 5 abstentions. At the same session, the NOC of the Federal Republic of Germany was finally recognised, while the recognition of the NOC of East Germany was rejected.<sup>131</sup> During this period, there were a number of reclassifications within the IOC, which seriously disrupted the Movement.

At this point in time, the ideological differences between West and East continued to be the focus of attention and the possibility that the Cold War would escalate into a nuclear conflict was a very real threat. The war had commenced in North Korea as a result of US initiative and the UN following its lead. The Chinese communists, trained and armed by the Russians, had convinced the Westerners that they were attempting to expand and take over the region. Invoking the communist danger, Senator Joseph McCarthy in America had led an extensive

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<sup>131</sup> Minutes of the 46th IOC Session (1951), Vienna.

purging of society of all those with friendly inclinations towards communism, accusing and unfairly pursuing persecuting many innocent American citizens. In South Africa, the policy of apartheid and specifically the policy prohibiting black athletes from using the same sporting facilities as the whites, forced the IOC to implement the basic Principle of equality set out in its Charter, banning them from participating in the Games for the next 40 years.

All these situations constituted issues of internal policy and could not be controlled by the IOC, but to some extent they also influenced the evolution of the Olympic Games. Both the USA and the USSR, which decided to send athletes to the Games after 40 years, attempted to prove the superiority of their socio-political system through their victories at the Games, allowing the Cold War to dominate sport as well. Amongst athletes there was an obvious lack of trust and a great rivalry. In order to house the Soviet delegation and those of its allies (at their demand), a smaller Olympic Village was constructed, so that their athletes would have no interaction whatsoever with Western athletes. Nobody else was allowed access to this village, not even the Finns, who were organising the Games. The Soviet delegation was complete but, as was later ascertained, there were instances of athletes who were not included in the delegation, as they were not “politically trusted” by the Party, something previously unheard of in Olympic history; a stance which, although never substantiated, is nevertheless considered to be true – particularly in view of the selective defections that occurred in subsequent years from the Soviet Union, as well as other athletes from the Eastern bloc towards the West. Although there were no defections four years before, during the 1952 Helsinki Games, at the 2012 London Games, Marie Provaznikova, President of the Gymnastics Federation of Czechoslovakia, had abandoned her country’s delegation and defected to the US.<sup>132</sup>

The Americans attempted to send the best possible team, but due to financial difficulties, they almost did not even send a full team, a fact that, on the basis of the perceptions of that period in time, would have constituted a defeat for the free world. However, Bob Hope and Bing Crosby, based both on the solidarity of American citizens and on the particular enmity that had been created in domestic politics against the Eastern Bloc, held a television marathon, which raised one million US\$ and funded the US delegation to the Games.<sup>133</sup>

The election of Brundage, as the IOC President, did not go unnoticed by the

132 <http://mentalfloss.com/article/31434/brief-history-olympic-defectors>

133 <http://bingfan03.blogspot.com/2012/08/bing-and-1952-olympic-telethon.html>

Soviets, who claimed that he would utilise any means possible in order to ensure that athletes from the Anglo-Saxon world would be the winners. In order to serve their propaganda, both sides had invented their own ranking systems, which, however, were not officially recognised by the IOC. And yet again, nationalism cast its shadow over the Olympic Ideals.

Nationalist China (Taiwan) insisted that its athletes should be permitted to participate in the Games, Eastern Germany was induced to do the same, without, however, the desired results. While, initially, the IOC had decided that the two countries should not participate, it later overturned its decision and issued an invitation to participate. Taiwan did not accept and proceeded to boycott the Games. Another proposal worth noting is that by Rolf Marffly, a representative of Hungarian groups of political refugees, that refugees should be allowed to participate in the Games, but this was never accepted, as mentioned in a previous chapter. It took more than 60 years for the IOC to finally accept a similar proposal from its President, Bach.

The Finns proclaimed the Olympic Truce, which was traditional in ancient times, hoping that the Games would be held without interruptions. In the end, they contrived to organise excellent Games, with almost 5,000 athletes participating, of whom 519 were women (Masumoto, 2008). The 1952 Helsinki Games established an exceptionally high standard in terms of sporting performance, and they marked the beginning of the substantial development of the Institution and of the IOC itself. From that period, the Games started to become wider-reaching and more costly, thus discouraging future bidding and hosting (Miller, 2019).

### **Melbourne 1956: Emergence of the Cold War**

In the beginning of this book, the author attempted to make a subtle distinction as regards the meaning of political presence in the Olympic Movement. Sometimes in the form of interference and other times in the form of involvement, politics never stopped playing an important role in the course of the Movement. To a lesser or greater degree, this distinction appeared in all the previous Games, but never in those of Melbourne, where international relations directly affected these Games as there was a very broad field of political and ideological contention. The face-off between East and West and the nuclear arms race continued to affect the world political scene and, of course, the Olympic Movement.

Egyptian President, Gamal Nasser, decided to close the Suez Canal, creating the crisis that bears its name. South Africa continued its objectionable policies

of racial segregation but was no longer the sole exemplar of such a policy, as in Kenya the Mau - Mau Rebellion had broken out, yet another racial war between blacks and whites. In the meantime, Eisenhower was elected for a second term in office in US, with Richard M. Nixon as his Vice President. In a historic decision for American events, the US Supreme Court abolished the policy of racial segregation in American schools and imposed mixing students at every level of the education system. This decision saw a plethora of reactions and violent events and needed an extended period of time to go into effect.

In Europe, on 4 November 1956, just 18 days before the opening of the Games, the Soviet Union suppressed a serious revolution against the pro-communist regime in a bloody military intervention, which resulted in the slaughter of 2,500 Hungarians and 700 Soviets in the conflict that took place in Budapest and the surrounding areas (Monnin & David, 2009). Many States expressed their intention to abstain from the Games in protest. Condemning the invasion, Brundage made a statement that clearly demonstrated his philosophy on the relationship between politics and sport: *"The Olympic Games are contests between individuals and not nations. In an imperfect world, if participation in sport is to be stopped every time the laws of humanity are violated, there will never be any international contest"* (Senn, 1999, p. 107).

At the same time, the political conflict between China and Taiwan and North and South Korea caused turmoil in the IOC, which was vainly trying to find a mutually acceptable solution.

This very unstable global environment had an impact on how the 1956 Melbourne Games turned out. A group of Hungarian immigrants in Australia protested against the Russian participation in the Games and there was great fear of reprisals for the British/French invasion of the Suez Canal. The IOC decided to allow the countries involved in war to participate, with the hope that their athletes would compete bearing in mind the Olympic Ideals and would manage to start a discussion that could lead to achieving peace in the future.

Brundage decreed that nations at war were eligible to compete in the Games. This was a difficult decision for him and the IOC. The hope was that the athletes from the warring countries could put aside their differences for the duration of the Games and compete athletically and not as combatant soldiers (Mechikoff, 2014).

The friction on the political scene, however, unfortunately led to misconduct in the Games. The Hungarians met the Soviets in a historical semi-final in water polo, known as "Blood in the water" match, during which athletes from both teams

exchanged punches and kicks under the water, to a degree that some had to be hospitalised. This was a black day for Olympism. For the record, the Hungarian team beat the Soviets 4-0 and met Yugoslavia in the final, which it won 2-1 and gained the gold medal.

In total 7 countries decided not to send teams to Melbourne. Spain, Holland and Switzerland chose to protest the Soviet intervention in Hungary; Communist China as a reaction to the acceptance of Taiwan; while Egypt, Iraq and Lebanon in protest against British, French and Israeli attacks in Egypt. IOC President Brundage encouraged these countries to rethink their stance because, as he claimed, if participation in a sporting event were to be threatened whenever humanitarian Principles are violated, there would be no international competition and, by extension, a core of international cooperation should be inactivated. During these Games, Eastern bloc athletes initiated an exceptional wave of defections to the West. Forty-five Hungarian athletes did not board the return plane to Budapest.<sup>134</sup> And while all of this was happening outside the Movement, the situation within the IOC was no better. Soviet dominance of the international sporting field gave the opportunity to Konstantin Andrianov, IOC member for the USSR, a year earlier to seek the reorganisation of the IOC's structure and broader representation of the body, as he claimed the inequality in the representation of the countries-partners of the Committee created a situation that was not democratic. For example, some countries had more than one representative and others none, especially in an era when there were 150 NOCs, with the emergence of new States in Africa and Asia. He campaigned for the IOC body to be comprised, besides its elected members, by the Presidents of the NOCs and the Presidents of the International Federations! It was obvious that the intention of Andrianov and the USSR was not only to change the composition of the Institution for "democratic" reasons, but to convert the sports organisation into a purely politicised body controlled by the States' governments.

Brundage handled the matter with great diplomacy, keeping Andrianov's proposal on the table, whilst at the same time preparing the General Assembly for the forthcoming discussion. Finally, under pressure from Andrianov, he brought the matter to the IOC Session in Athens, in 1961, where the proposal of the latter was voted down with 34 against and only 4 in favour. Although Brundage accepted, as a matter of principle, that in the future the representation had to be broader he supported the rejection of Andrianov's proposal on the grounds that: "... the

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134 <http://mentalfloss.com/article/31434/brief-history-olympic-defectors>



*Presidents of the International Federations represent their sport, the Presidents of the Olympic Committees represent, primarily, their nations... Conversely, IOC members represent the Olympic Movement exclusively and not their countries or their sports. Thus, without the IOC being able to elect its members, it will soon lose its independence and impartiality, values that are a key element for achieving its goals"* (Posey, 1998, pp. 101-102).

### **Rome 1960: Third World appearance**

In June 1955, Rome, for a number of semantic reasons, easily gained the preference of the majority of IOC members for the organisation of the 1960 Games against very strong candidates, such as Detroit, Lausanne, Budapest, Mexico City and Tokyo. Rome had already lost the opportunity to organise the Games three times: in 1904 because of the eruption of Mount Vesuvius and in 1908 and 1944 when it was forced to withdraw its bid. Compared to those in Helsinki and in particular in Melbourne, the Rome Games were held in a much more favourable international environment. The Olympic Movement had survived the post-war conflicts of East and West, managing to maintain its sport autonomy despite extreme political efforts against its development. As Senn (1999, p. 109) characteristically points out: *"... the Olympic Games survived the challenge, absorbing the rivalry of the Great Powers within the edifice of sports competition. The Cold War had penetrated the Games, the Games had merged into the Cold War, but the Cold War never adopted the Games"*.

The Cold War continued to affect the international political scene and the two superpowers utilised all the means at their disposal to promote their ideological propaganda. The situation in South-East Asia was exceptionally unstable with masses of demonstrations for election scandals in democratic South Korea and the Americans becoming slowly increasingly involved in the costly (in terms of money and human lives) war in Vietnam.

The revolution in Cuba, with Fidel Castro coming to power, created a communist regime in breathing distance from the US. Cuba received military, financial and technological assistance from the Soviets and the Russian military facilities located there became a major threat for the Americans. The Soviets shot down two American aircrafts and started to expel American students and businessmen from the country as suspected spies, while the Americans responded by expelling Soviet diplomats with the same charges. A year later, the entire situation led to the Cuban Missile Crisis and outright war almost broke out between the two rival

camps. The emergence of the new independent States in Africa continued and the presence of their athletes in the Games became more and more evident, which was also reflected in the internal problems of the IOC.

The 1960 Rome Games were very well organised with exceptional facilities on the western side of the city, where a central road had been built to allow easy access to visitors. At the Olympic Village, organisers had taken care to separate the delegation of the Soviets from those of the Americans and the British, placing neutral countries, such as Switzerland and Liechtenstein, between them. However, the fact that Soviet athletes associated with athletes of other countries made a very favourable impression: this was a behaviour that reinforced the basic aim of the Olympic Games to support international collaboration and promote mutual understanding.

When the Soviets announced that the purpose of their participation in the Games was to win as many medals as they could and to prove that their system of mass participation in sports was far better and more effective than other systems, it became clear that athletes, whether willingly or unwittingly, were now gears in a political war, where nationalism clearly held sway (Keech, 2001).

Communist China refused, for yet another time, to participate in the Games as long as the Republic of China (Taiwan) was taking part: they participated under the name Formosa and paraded with their own flag and not that of China, as the IOC did not recognise it as representing all of China (Berlioux, 1973). East and West Germany paraded for the first time under a common flag but essentially the members of the delegation were segregated into eastern and western.

The United German delegation (Federal and East Germany) paraded in the opening ceremony under a common flag and with the name *"United Team of Germany"*, and Brundage, in response to the enthusiasm of the President of Italy, Giovanni Gronchi, who considered that the IOC had wrought a *"miracle"*, said: *"But in sport, we do such things"*. Brundage saw the United Team of Germany as a powerful symbol of what the Games expressed: *"transcending differences"*. In a speech, three years later, Brundage underscored the importance of this success: *"... The spectacle of Federal and East German athletes in the same uniform marching behind the same leaders and under the same flag, is an 'inspiration' under present political conditions and a great service to all the German people who wish for a united country"* (Guttmann, 1992, p. 105). Even if only formally, the two Germanies had agreed on this appearance, although the delegation was separated into Eastern and Western members.

The Sharpeville massacre in South Africa and the dissolution of the African Congress caused turmoil in the Olympic Family. Several activists tried to convince Brundage that South Africa must be banned from the Games. The IOC President once more resisted this request, as always referring to his view about the non-involvement of sport and politics, and stating that he had the explicit assurance of the South African sports authorities that the citizens of the country would be free to participate in the preliminaries for a place in their national team and that, simply, the non-whites were not sufficiently capable of beating their opponents! (Maraniss, 2008). Was this an excuse or wilful naiveté? However, South Africa's participation in the Rome Games was also its last before the decision to ban it from the Movement, three years later.

Brundage was re-elected President of the IOC, despite Soviet efforts to elect Andrianov. In these Games, the US was not the only country not to dip their flag as they passed before the officials. The same arrogant behaviour was also demonstrated by the Russian delegation. The competition between the two countries had infiltrated the Olympic Games for good.

### **Tokyo 1964: Last Games of innocence**

Shortly before the Games, the international political situation was particularly tense. The ever-increasing involvement of American military forces in South-East Asia, which were campaigning against the forces of North Vietnam and increasing losses of human lives were gaining ever-more attention from the press. China carried out its first atom bomb test with the excuse that they were building nuclear weapons to protect their country in case the US started a war. The Japanese were no exception in acting according to the rule of satisfying their nationalist goals. Showing an obsession with perfection and expending approximately two billion \$US, they organised the best Games of all times. In order to ensure that all would run smoothly, they tested all the facilities and procedures by organising an International Sports Week a year before, in which approximately 4,000 athletes from 35 different countries competed.

A regional "Olympiad" organised in Djakarta, Indonesia, in 1962, became a source of conflict between the IOC and Tokyo. Indonesian President Sukarno, who was considered to be a leftist and had quite close ties with the Arab world and Communist China, organised these sports contests under the name "Games of the New Emerging Forces" (GANEFO), initially with the consent of the IOC. Under pressure from the Arabs and Communist China, they excluded Israel and

Taiwan from the games for political reasons. Following these developments, the IOC withdrew its consent from the games and expelled Indonesia from the Olympic family. Despite the pressures on the IOC from government representatives of North Korea, Indonesia and the USSR, all athletes who had participated in the GANEFO games were barred from taking part in the Tokyo Games (Schlatter, 1964). Although the remaining athletes from Indonesia and North Korea could have competed, the two countries decided to withdraw their entire teams. Indonesia imposed a ban on transmitting any information and news concerning the games.

Initially, North Korea intended to participate in the games along with South Korea, as a unified team, an initiative that did not bear fruit, as there were differences, particularly concerning the name of the team, its flag and its national anthem (Mi-Suk & Streppelhoff, 2011).

The IOC continued to be against any form of classification used by the two opposing factions for nationalist reasons. Despite all its efforts, however, it did not manage to avert the publication of the medals list, on which the US after two consecutive Olympiads, was ahead.

For the first time, American television was present in the Rome Games, sending a live image to millions of viewers around the world. This event was hailed as another achievement of the Movement because it brought significant revenue to the IOC. However, it was too early to see the magnitude of the disruption brought on the Games, with the presence of television creating an advanced platform for the transmission of political and ideological messages.

Richard Pound (1994), senior IOC member for Canada, characterised the Rome Games as *"the last Games of innocence"*, even though there were no few moments of political chicanery that took place in them.

At the Session held within the framework of the Games, Brundage managed to get unanimously re-elected for yet another four years at the IOC's helm.

## **20. The Olympiads of challenges**

### **Mexico 1968 - Munich 1972 - Montreal 1976 - Moscow 1980 - Los Angeles 1984 - Seoul 1988**

The Games that preceded the 1968 Mexico Olympics showed, each in its own way, the direction the Movement had taken as a result of the ever-increasing influence of political expediency. The serious sporting conflict that occurred in

1952 between the US and the USSR, exacerbated by the demands of the newly liberated States that emerged following the cessation of colonial rule in Africa and Asia, added a further dimension to the Games and lasted throughout the following 35 years.

At that time, with the development of television, the sports field was the ideal place for the promotion of messages of all kinds, of a political or ideological nature, insofar as it entered the home of any sports fan or Olympic enthusiast. Television had a catalytic effect, because the messages transmitted through images could not be ignored or altered. As will be seen in the following chapters, this development has had several positive but also several negative effects.

The 20 years that elapsed between the 1968 Mexico and the 1988 Seoul Games were marked by a series of political events within and outside the Movement and culminated in the clash between sport and politics. The constant display of ideological messages, the boycott of the Games and the emergence of terrorism have stigmatized Olympism and its rules, turning peaceful contests of athletes into a field of political conflict. It is no exaggeration to say that this 20-year period was the most painful period in the 130 years of the Movement's life. In fact, the challenges the IOC faced during this period, instead of breaking it, made it even stronger, establishing it as an essential player in the search for the world peace, which was also the vision of the reviver Coubertin.

### **Mexico 1968: "Silent gesture" and ideological activism on the podium**

Undoubtedly, in terms of political and ideological interference and propaganda, the most important edition of the Olympic Games was that of Mexico, in 1968. It was not only the serious events that marked the international political scene at that time, thus creating a suffocating circle around the Games, inevitably affecting their staging. Even more so, it was the strong anti-racist policy that found a favourable ground for its promotion, through a series of "*silent*" protests, by some athletes who wanted to promote their ideological positions, exploiting the institution of the Games.

The conflict between "*moral obligation*" and "*the obligation to respect the rules of the Games*" has been the field of severe confrontation of ideas and priorities, which has preoccupied for many decades to this day, numerous teachers, historians, researchers, sports officials and athletes. It would be unreasonable to argue that the anti-racist movement, which at the time dominated many countries, including the US, did not reflect the views of the vast majority of people world-

wide. Nor can one disagree with the view that this anti-racist policy reflected, in essence, a series of Olympic Values. The objection, however, expressed by many scholars and researchers during this period focused only on whether the scene of the Olympic process was the one that allowed the display of these messages. In this context, it should not escape anyone's attention that the entire structure and operation of the Olympic Movement has been entrusted, with universal acceptance, to an organisation with a Charter, which includes and promotes not only the universal rights Olympism and its Principles are founded, but also a number of obligations for those who wish to join the Movement. This is where the problem lies! What prevails when the moral obligations conflict with the statutory obligations? The question is a difficult one, but the answer is even more difficult.

When at the IOC Session in Baden-Baden, in 1963, Mexico City was selected to host the XIX Olympic Games, it was not only the unstable internal political situation that raised questions about the ability of a non-industrial country to carry out this huge task. There was also serious concern among coaches and physiologists about the resilience of the athletes to cope with the 2,240 m altitude, at which the city is located. Brundage allayed this alarm by simply saying: *"The Olympic Games belong to all the countries of the world, be they hot or cold, wet or dry, in the east or west, north or south, or at high or low altitudes. The Games were not instituted to break records..."* (Miller, 2019, p. 176).

With regional conflicts continuing in the Middle East, Africa and South-East Asia and the Americans continuing to involve themselves in the war in Vietnam, the Russians crushing a revolt in Czechoslovakia, the Cold War continued without end in sight, J. F. Kennedy's brother assassinated and Richard M. Nixon taking the reins of the Presidency in the US, the world political system remained very unstable. Furthermore, in various places around the world a wave of political activism had commenced, which mainly involved students demanding greater equality, liberty and respect for human rights, amongst other things. In the US, a group of such political activists, the Black Panthers, protested at every opportunity against the social problems caused by rampant racism in their society. Throughout the country, there were many demonstrations, protest marches against the Vietnam war, but also for social issues, including education and human rights. After the assurances of the South Africa Organising Committee that all discrimination in sport imposed for years by the racist government of the country would be eliminated by 1972, the IOC decided to invite the country to participate in the Games. However, some 40 African countries along with the Soviet Union, together with

individual athletes, reacted and announced that they would boycott the Olympics if the delegations of these countries were accepted. Finally, when it became clear that the survival of the Games was at stake, the two African countries were barred from the Games. In April 1968, following much procrastination, the IOC agreed that: *"It would be most unwise for South Africa to participate in the Games"* (Espy, 1981, pp. 125-128). The decision for Rhodesia, which had the same racist policy in sports, was similar.

IOC's yielding to the blackmail of boycott could be considered a defeat of the Olympic Movement; but the international outcry against the racist regimes was such that this decision was almost inevitable. It should be noted at this point that the two countries' expulsion from the Games was not based on the general racist policy of their governments, but rather on the implementation of this policy in the field of sports. The statement by Brundage at the IOC Session in Tehran in 1967, in which he sought to make a clear distinction between government policy of discrimination in the country and racial discrimination in sport, is relevant in this matter: *"... as the IOC cares about the situation in the field of sport and we must not allow the institution and the Movement to be used for change of governments"*.<sup>135</sup>

Besides international concerns, there was no lack of domestic problems in Mexico. The fact that organising the Games required a lot of money, while social programmes giving assistance to the country's poor had great deficits, was cause for mass social clashes and protests. Shortly before the Games commenced, extensive protests broke out, which resulted in local police and the army clashing with a crowd of almost 150,000 students who were demanding greater autonomy for universities and were against the policies of Mexican President Diaz Ordaz.

The clashes lasted for six whole days and the army was forced to open fire around the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in the Tlatelolco region of the city of Mexico, killing more than 44 protesters according to official announcements (more than 200 according to prevailing versions) and to arrest more than 2,000. (Young, 1985). The fear that prevailed in the city was that activist students would try to impede the Games and to showcase the Mexico's domestic problem. This made the Mexicans place armed forces at the entrance of the Olympic stadium and a large number of secret agents inside. Thankfully, the students did not make any such move and everything ran smoothly. The mastermind behind this operation was Louis Echeverria, Minister of Interior and later President of Mexico who, from

<sup>135</sup> Minutes of the 66th IOC Session, 1967, Tehran.

2002 until 2009, was convicted in many instances for the atrocities at Tlatelolco, but not on charges of genocide of which he had been accused.

In the US a group of African-American political activists, the Black Panthers led by Malcolm X, had been protesting against the extreme racism in American society, often using violence. An admirer and follower of Malcolm X, as a student of San Jose College in California and later as a young sociology professor, was the prominent athlete, Harry Edwards, who in 1967 founded the Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR), which launched a boycott campaign of the Mexican Games by African-American athletes. Elite athletes and members of the US Olympic team, such as Lee Evans and Tommie Smith, were followers of this movement. *"Despite the large expansion of the movement among American athletes, the latter were faced with a dilemma: abandon the Olympic dream pursued for years in the name of their anti-racist boycott campaign or remain on the Olympic team and possibly win an Olympic victory"* (Smith, 2009, p. 236). Encouraging them to stay in sports and the Olympic team, American sports legend Jesse Owens had said: *"There is no place in the world of sport for politics"* (Miller, 2019, p. 177). But as it turned out later, some athletes chose a third, even more challenging path: Join the Olympic team, compete, win and take advantage of their public outreach to protest about the situation they were experiencing within their own country.

However, the event that left its mark on the Games took place in the Olympic stadium during the medal ceremony for the winners of the track & field 200m men's race. The two American sprinters, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, who finished first and third, decided to protest in an original way. They appeared at the medal award ceremony without shoes, both wearing only black socks to represent African- American poverty in the US. When the US national anthem began playing, Smith raised his right black-gloved fist, symbolizing black power, while he wore a black scarf around his neck, symbolizing pride, and holding a box with an olive branch in the name of peace. Carlos raised his left black-gloved fist; a gesture symbolizing the unity of blacks in the US and a necklace with beads around his neck, thus recalling the lynching of blacks in the US. During the national anthem and the hoisting of the American flag, the two athletes bowed their heads in a sign of dissatisfaction and disgust at these two symbols of their country. The third athlete on the podium was the Australian Peter Norman, who also wore the OPHR badge in solidarity with Smith and Carlos. After a one-minute silence was observed in the fully packed Olympic stadium, boos echoed throughout the venue disapproving of the athletes' protest.





*The controversial  
"silent gesture".*

After many hours in conference, the USOC reprimanded them severely and apologised to the IOC and the Mexican Organising Committee. But the IOC, which had already warned that they would not accept any form of political or social protest by any participant, replied immediately that if the athletes were not punished and made examples of, the entire US Olympic team would risk being excluded. Not having any other choice, the USOC decided on their immediate departure for the US. They immediately became martyrs. The Cubans extended invitations to them and the Cuban 400-meter relay team sent its silver medals to Harry Edwards, the founder of the "Olympic Project for Human Rights". Of 20 athletes polled on the US team, white and black, 13 were in favour of the protest, five were opposed, one undecided, and one had no opinion (Espy, 1981).

However, it was not just these three athletes who expressed their ideological protest at the Olympics medal award ceremony. Three other US African-American runners, Lee Evans, Larry James and Ron Freeman, appeared wearing black berets during the 4 X 400m relay race, symbolizing the Malcolm X Black Panther movement. They did however remove them during the national anthem and did not bow their heads as Smith and Carlos did. They were not punished by the USOC nor by the IOC,

because the prevailing view was that, with this move, they did not want to express anti-American feelings, but sympathy for their two teammates! (Guttmann, 1992). Not all African-American athletes agreed with Smith and Carlos's now renowned "Silent Gesture". By way of example, gold Olympic medallist, George Foreman, stated that the act of his fellow athletes "... was meaningless and went against an institution, which had proven less racist than many others". Indeed, Foreman did not miss out on the opportunity following his victory in the second round (which he won by knocking-out Soviet Ionis Chepulis) to blatantly wave a small American flag shouting in favour of the US (Guttmann, 1992). Even Jesse Owens, as Carlos mentioned in his book, disagreed with the provocative protest and told his two fellow athletes: "...the black fist is a meaningless symbol. When you open it, you have nothing but fingers – weak, empty fingers. The only time the black fist has significance is when there's money inside. There's where the power lies" (Zirin, 2013 Preface xvi).

A similar protest to that of Smith and Carlos, but to a lesser extent and not against her own country, was that of Vera Caslavská, an athlete from Czechoslovakia. Although she swept the medals in gymnastics, she came second on the floor, sharing the podium with her Soviet rival. During the Soviet national anthem she protested by quietly turning her head down and away, thus showing her strong dissatisfaction with the Soviet military intervention in her country.<sup>136</sup> When she returned to her country she was discretely pushed into the background by the pro-Soviet authorities.

In 2016, Smith and Carlos were invited by the US OC to become ambassadors of the Olympic delegation to the 2016 Rio Games to honour with their presence the event organised by President Barack Obama, for the athletes of the Olympic family. The US government waited 45 years since their expulsion from the Mexico Games for inappropriate behaviour and violation of the regulations enshrined in the IOC Charter, before officially recognising the importance of this silent gesture. Nevertheless, in his speech before the athletes, President Obama called their protest controversial, a fact that clearly shows the different perspective from which each side sees this event. US politics condemned the "silent gesture" for many years. When the conditions that shape it had changed, it recognised the act as heroic! For the IOC and the Olympic Movement this protest never ceased to be a violation of the rules and Principles of the Charter!<sup>137</sup>

Peter Norman's story was similar, upon his return to Australia. Although

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136 <https://www.bbc.com/sport/olympics/45900544>

137 <https://edition.cnn.com/2016/09/29/sport/tommie-smith-john-carlos-us-olympic-team-white-house/index.html>

he repeatedly qualified for the 1972 Munich Games, he was never given the opportunity to compete in them. For many years he was treated with indifference and forgotten by the political and sports Authorities of Australia. Only in 2012 did the Australian House of Representatives decide to apologise for the behaviour towards him and recognise the importance of participating in the "*silent gesture*", in 1968. However, he had passed away in 2006 and did not live to feel the same satisfaction that his fellow athletes did as a result of the public apology and recognition of this overall contribution to sports!

Finally, was it the right decision of the athletes to express their ideological protest during the medal award ceremony or not? Those who believe that a protest in defence of human rights at whatever moment and location presents itself at the time is greater than any obligation towards a rule of conduct enshrined in a charter or other secular restriction, will concur that the decision was correct. Conversely, those who support the idea that the Olympic Movement has acquired the right to impose its own restrictive rules of behaviour so that the sporting field is not converted into an ideological and political arena, will answer that it was not. The former state that, especially in the matter of defending human rights, there can be no limitations to moral obligation. The latter claim that Carlos and Smith exceeded the boundaries of sports ethics as, when they decided to participate in the Games, they had accepted the commitments imposed by the IOC Charter and, in any case, their disrespect towards the US flag, which they represented, after an unhindered competition with their fellow athletes in their country, without discrimination on the basis of colour or religious orientation, showed a total lack of respect towards what they were invited to do and had accepted to honour.

Should they have been punished by expulsion from the Games or not? Those who advocate the view that protests in the defence of human rights are morally allowed to be expressed freely everywhere, consider the expulsion of athletes to be unfair. Those who support that the idea sports and any expression thereof must remain untouched by other pursuits that exploit them due to their global acceptance, irrespective of the ideological nature of their content, consider that it was imperative to punish these athletes because otherwise the Movement would have repeatedly seen such challenges, with a different content each time, and would risk becoming another platform for activism.

The above questions, and more so the answers to them, can be interpreted in many ways, which must be correlated to the times when they are expressed, as well as the conditions under which someone is called upon to espouse one or the

other position. In the '60s and '70s, the Olympic Movement fought long and hard to preserve its independence and autonomy against any attempt at political infiltration. Therefore, it had to impose its own rules, which in many instances appeared unjust. Now that the strength and independence of the Movement is uncontested, any well-intentioned analyst could claim that the IOC could have reacted in a gentler, more humane manner. As was the case in the instance of Feysa Lilesa, the Ethiopian Marathon runner, who raised his arms above his head and crossed his wrists at the finish line in the 2016 Rio Olympics in protest against the Ethiopian government's harsh treatment of the Oromo people. The IOC simply reminded him of his obligations in accordance with the Charter.<sup>138</sup>

At these Games, in many instances it was difficult to separate what was going on in politics and what was taking place on the sports ground, with the former often overshadowing the latter. Unfortunately, in this instance violence constituted part of the Games, both on a national and an international level, with negative consequences for the Olympic Movement, which would continue for the next five Olympiads.

### **Munich 1972: Terror over the Olympic City**

The Games of the XX Olympiad took place in an international climate of constant turmoil and escalation of relations between East and West. In the midst of a great conflict and while in 1968 political activism against racism was very popular, by 1972 this had been replaced by a wave of political terrorism, particularly in the Middle East. The US continued to be involved in the Vietnam War and to support South Vietnam, as they believed that military intervention was the best way to defend their national interests in the region, while the USSR and Communist China armed and trained North Vietnam. The great religious clashes in Ireland between the Catholics and the Protestants, which broke out due to a series of social and political issues, formed fertile grounds for political terrorism. The violence that broke out made the government send the army to enforce order, an event that gave even greater impetus to the action of terrorist organisations, including that of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), which had carried out many bomb attacks in public places, resulting in the deaths of several innocent civilians.

Political terrorism was also on the rise in the Middle East. The political and religious war between Israelis and Arabs, which had broken out after World War II continued, with Syria and Lebanon supplying war materiel to Palestinian rebels and

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138 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-37186348>

Israel taking military action against these groups and their terrorist activities. The Arab defeat in the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1967, had shown to their great consternation that the Israelis, supported by the US, were not an insignificant opponent. One of these organisations taking on guerrilla action against Israel was "*Black September*", whose actions stained the Olympic Movement and Olympic history.

Even in Africa, the suppression exercised by apartheid in South Africa and Rhodesia had given rise to the creation of guerrilla groups of blacks against the oppressive white regimes. In Munich, however, Rhodesia attempted yet again to take part in the Games and, initially, achieved this with the consent of the IOC, as well as the Supreme African Sports Council (SASC) under specific constraints, which the SASC believed would not be accepted. To their great surprise, however, the Rhodesian government accepted all the terms and their delegation to Munich included 7 black athletes, who were agreeable to parade under any flag and had agreed to replace their national anthem with that of Great Britain.

One could argue that this action shows the grandeur and significance of the Games, as a country was willing to set aside its nationalist symbols in order to participate. However, this African country, because of its domestic apartheid policy, had been sanctioned by the UN Security Council, which made the UN make a direct political intervention to the IOC decision, making the argument that providing the team with Olympic recognition was against the sanctions put in place by the UN Security Council (Little, 2005). Under these circumstances and following a series of announcements by 12 countries that they would boycott the Games, and despite the support of the German Organising Committee and the IOC's President, Brundage, the IOC voted to keep Rhodesia out of the Games. For yet another time, politics had superseded and overshadowed the Games, setting Olympic Ideals aside in practice.

The 73rd IOC Session, in Munich, was for the departing, certainly the most controversial IOC President, Avery Brundage, a meeting that was emotionally charged. A 20-year term in the Presidency of the Olympic Institution, full of events that essentially shaped the Movement after the war, ended with events that left a bitter taste in the mouth of the controversial American, despite the warm expression of his colleagues, shortly before the election of the new President, Lord Killanin. After acknowledging his long-standing contribution to the Movement, he was awarded a gold commemorative medal. His struggle to safeguard the amateur nature of the Games and his unwavering belief in the non-interference of politics with sport, inevitably brought him against both of these waves, which threatened to drown the Movement after World War II.

At this last Session, Brundage saw his struggle against political interference in the Movement suffering a strong blow from the two events that sealed Olympic history. The expulsion of Rhodesia, following the blackmail received by the members of the IOC from the other African countries and the terrorist attack of "Black September"! The debate on the issue of Rhodesia during the works of the Session was long and intense. The representatives of the Olympic Committee of Rhodesia presented to the IOC members all the evidence that they had fully complied with the organisation's requirements for the abolition of the policy of racial segregation in sport, as agreed at the previous Luxembourg Session, having in fact composed a delegation comprised only of black athletes. On the other hand, the representatives of the other African Olympic Committees, fully expressing the will of their governments, demanded that the invitation to Rhodesia to participate in the Games be withdrawn, otherwise all African countries would withdraw. From the positions of the members in the Session it appeared that their views were divided. Brundage put the following dilemma to a vote: They would either honour the agreement they had made with the Olympic Committee of Rhodesia thus jeopardizing the structure of the Games with the boycott of African countries or they would succumb to the pressure and withdraw Rhodesia from them. The President made a meaningful statement that *"...if they succumb to the political pressures of the governments of Africa and the UN, they will have succumbed to political desires forever and the Olympic Movement will suffer an incurable blow... If the Africans want to go home, the Games will not be ruined without them"*.

The result of the vote was 36 against the participation of Rhodesia in the Games and 31 in favour, with 3 abstentions. Brundage and his tough policy had failed for the first time during his presidency. He confessed bitterly after the vote, that it was the first time that his colleagues did not honour him with their trust and that, as it appeared, *"...it was indeed the time for him to leave the Movement"*.<sup>139</sup>

Once again, politics had imposed its own rules, forcing the IOC to revoke its own Principles in practice. The fact that this pressure served a particularly important value, such as the fight against racism, does not diminish the importance of the act of political interference in the peaceful and independent Olympic Movement and its exploitation at will, as will be seen soon after, throughout the Olympiads that followed until the end of the '80s.

If the activist silent protest of American athletes in the 1968 Mexico Games was

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139 Minutes of the 73rd IOC Session, 1972, Munich.

seen as a raw ideological exploitation of the Games, how could one characterise what happened in the Olympic Village, in Munich, where it was clear from the first moment that the terrorist attack had been prepared long in advance?

The worst ideological and political exploitation of the Games, which exceeded any form of political intervention until then, was the Palestinian terrorists' operation during the Games in Munich. An Institution whose development is based on peace, people's fraternity and fair play was bathed in blood.

On 5 September 1972, eight armed Palestinian terrorists, members of the Arab terrorist organisation Black September, invaded the Olympic Village and took over the rooms where the Israeli athletes were staying. Two athletes who resisted were executed on the spot, while the remaining nine became hostages. The terrorists demanded the release of 234 of their compatriots from Israeli prisons and of the German terrorists Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof from German prisons. For the implementation of their demand, they set a deadline until noon of the following day. The mobilisation was immediate by the German authorities and the negotiations started, in the midst of the pressure that was mounting and the isolation of the whole Olympic Village.



*5 September 1972: The day when the Olympic Movement was stained with the blood of innocent athletes!*

Following dramatic negotiations and after the Palestinians agreed to postpone the execution of a hostage every hour, after 12 noon, as they had initially decided and after they had already received the first negative response from the Israeli government to their demand, the terrorists gave the German authorities and the IOC the following ultimatum:<sup>140</sup>

The arrogant attitude of the Israeli military establishment and its objection to meet our demands would not make us forfeit our human approach and continue to find out a way to save the Israeli prisoners under the following conditions:

1. The Federal German Republic should announce its acceptance to take the Israeli prisoners to any place designated by our revolutionary forces at the Olympic Village.
2. The FGR has to provide our forces with three planes, aboard which the Israeli prisoners with our armed forces will be moved to the appointed destination, in three successive parties. Each party will only leave Munich after the arrival of the previous party to its destination.
3. Any attempt to foil our operation will end up with the liquidation of all the Israeli prisoners, and the FGR will be held responsible.
4. This ultimatum will expire in three hours. From now the FGR takes full responsibility to all consequences.
5. At the end of this ultimatum, if our demand to leave German territories will not be accepted, our revolutionary forces are ordered to adopt revolutionary and just violence, to give a most severe lesson to the warlords of the Israeli military machine and to the arrogance of the FGR.

#### Revolutionaries of the World Unite

The Palestinians considered this operation as part of an ongoing war between their revolutionary forces and the Israelis, which is why in the communiqué they characterise the Israelis as prisoners and at no point did they call them hostages.

Israel refused its consent. The terrorists negotiated successfully and were taken by helicopter to the nearby airport, Fürstenfeldbruck, in order to board the planes. There, they exchanged fire with the German police, during which the remaining nine Israeli athletes were executed, two of the terrorists were killed by the security forces and one police officer was killed in the crossfire. Three terrorists

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140 Minutes of the 73rd IOC Session, 1972, Munich.



were arrested, and three others escaped (Kennelly & Toohey, 2007). The tragic end of this assault is attributed to the mismanagement of the operation by the German authorities, on the one hand because German armed forces were not allowed to operate inside Germany during peacetime, according to the country's constitution and, on the other hand, because the few snipers were poorly positioned and coordinated, and could not accurately identify the positions of the terrorists.<sup>141</sup>

The great dilemma for the IOC was whether or not to let the Games go on. After several hours of discussions in the IOC and the Organising Committee, President Brundage's resolute proposal to continue the Games prevailed, following a ceremony that was held in memory of the Israeli athletes. Brundage's "*...the Games must go on*" decision has gone down in history as one of the most important decisions of the IOC based on the independence of the Movement from political and ideological efforts to alter its objectives.<sup>142</sup> One could say that it was a response to the brutal violation of the values of Olympism by politicians and ideologists who tried (and sometimes succeeded) to tarnish the peaceful aims of the Movement.

After these dramatic developments, the atmosphere was heavy, with fear rampant almost everywhere. For this reason, Egypt, Kuwait and Syria withdrew their Olympic delegations, while renowned American swimmer, Mark Spitz, who was Jewish, decided to return home for security reasons. The Arab nations of Lebanon, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Iran and Saudi Arabia decided to remain at the Games. The Norwegian handball team attempted to withdraw, but the IOC pressured the Norwegian government and they decided to remain, underlining the fact that high-level athletes are frequently not free to act according to what they want and become tools at the hands of governments and politicians, because the cost of going their own way would be too high for them to bear.

Unfortunately, the violence set into motion by the Palestinian terrorists did not stop at Munich. Israeli air forces bombed Arab guerrilla bases and the Israeli intelligence service, Mossad, located and executed two of the three terrorists who had escaped. The following year, they mistakenly considered that they had located the third man in Norway, and, as a result, killed an innocent Moroccan man, which led to six Israeli agents being arrested by the Norwegian authorities. The only thing the Israelis contrived with their reprisals was to cause even greater pain and to darken even further the stain on the Olympic Movement.

141 <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2012/may/02/50-stunning-olympic-moments-munich-72>

142 <https://www.olympic.org/munich-1972>

The only surviving Palestinian terrorist, Jamal al-Gashey, who was also considered the mastermind of the terrorist operation, when asked by a Guardian correspondent several years later, said: *"I am proud of what I did at Munich because it helped the Palestinian cause enormously. Before Munich the world had no idea about our struggle, but on that day, the name of 'Palestine' was repeated all around the world"*.<sup>143</sup>

The Munich massacre was part of a comprehensive strategic plan by the Palestinian Liberation Organisation in order to draw the eyes of the world to this matter. An Institution developed based on peace, the solidarity of the people and fair play became a blood bath. The cynical statement by Faud al-Shameli, one of the planners of the attack, shows their delusions, ignorance and fanaticism, but also their desperation: *"...bombing the offices of EL AL offers nothing to our struggle. We have to kill the important and famous people. Since we cannot come close to their Statesmen, we have to kill artists and sportsmen..."* (Dershowitz, 2002, p. 41).

Johnson (2001), claims that the incident in Munich happened at a decisive point in time, at which modern terrorism was spreading, and that the international interest elicited by the operation, clearly showed that terrorism could be an efficient tactic deployed by guerrilla groups.

This view was fully justified by the content of a statement by Al Sayad, Black September member, from Lebanon, a week after the Munich attack: *"In our assessment, and in light of the result, we have made one of the best achievements of Palestinian commando action. A bomb in the White House, a mine in the Vatican, the death of Mao Tsetung, an earthquake in Paris could not have echoed through the consciousness of every man in the world like the operation in Munich"* (Kennelly & Toohey, 2007, p.6).

After the Games continued, two further events left their stigma. Eight IRA bicycle riders deliberately caused a pile-up, in order to remove the one official participant from Ireland from the race, as a reprisal for the conditions in Northern Ireland. A second event was the life-long expulsion of two black American athletes, Vincent Matthews and Wayne Collett, who won gold and silver at the 400m event due to improper behaviour during the medal ceremony; in an attempt to imitate Smith and Carlos, during the US anthem and the hoisting of the flag, in a "protest" that went down in history as the *"Forgotten Protest"*, they began to joke provocatively among themselves, ostentatiously ignoring the ceremony. The spectators reacted with boos, whistles and catcalls, and Collett provocatively raised

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143 *ibid*: <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2012/may/02/50-stunning-olympic-moments-munich-72>

a clenched fist to the crowd before entering the portal of the dressing room.<sup>144</sup>

The USOC reacted and claimed that no political protest or other kind of protest was intended, but the IOC remained unyielding in its decision, wanting to show that it was no longer willing to support any further insult to Olympic Values by anyone wishing to take advantage of the publicity of the Games. Consequently, both athletes were suspended for life by the IOC.

Despite the fact that the IOC implemented such policies and levied penalties on athletes, on the State level, and particularly in the instances of powerful States, it remained unfortunately weak, a fact that became very evident with the boycotts in 1980 and 1984.

In a statement to the Guardian, in 2012, the IOC President Jacques Rogge, said: "The massacre in Munich strengthened the Olympic Movement in its effort to contribute more than ever to building a peaceful and better world".<sup>145</sup>

As Mechikoff (2014, p. 374), observes "...the Munich Olympics went on despite terrorism, boycotts, and protests. This is not to suggest that the IOC, the athletes and the Munich Organising Committee were unfazed by these events. It did not matter what political or social beliefs were represented; millions of people around the world mourned the slain Olympians. However, in the Olympic Village and in Israel, the pain was especially evident. Once again though, the Olympic spirit was able to transcend political and social differences as millions of television viewers around the world turned in to watch the world's most anticipated and most celebrated sports festival, albeit with tears".

Kenny Moore, in his 1996 Sports Illustrated article, entitled "Munich's Message" presents the terrorist attack in Munich as "*the lost innocence of the modern Olympic Games*". Dick Pound, in *Inside the Olympics* (2004, p. 12), notes that "...Munich changed the security landscape for the Olympic Games".

As Eastern bloc athletes took every opportunity that presented itself at international competitions to defect to the West, making news in the world of sport. According to Associated Press, 117 people defected at the Munich Games, with only very limited information existing about the conditions under which this took place.<sup>146</sup>

The persistent attempt by the Israelis to hold a memorial service during the

144 <http://speedendurance.com/2011/02/01/vince-matthews-and-wayne-collette-1972-the-forgotten-protest/>

145 <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2012/may/02/50-stunning-olympic-moments-munich-72>

146 <http://mentalfloss.com/article/31434/brief-history-olympic-defectors>

Games in honour of the athletes who lost their lives in the Olympic Village by the Palestinian terrorists at the 1972 Munich Games, met with the strong resistance of the IOC, which excluded this possibility, considering that it would constitute a purely political act that would undermine both the fundamental Principles of the Charter and the relations among the athletes participating in the Games.

### **Montreal 1976: First serious boycott**

The politicisation of the Games at Montreal was very extensive, as certain countries utilised the Games as a medium to promote nationalism and various other political interests, placing the Olympic Movement in the midst of controversy. The show-down between Communist China and Taiwan had not lessened in the least. Furthermore, at that time, Communist China constituted a major trading partner for Canada, with the result that it could influence certain of that country's policies very extensively. Although initially the Organising Committee for the Games appeared to be going to accept Taiwan to the Games, after the People's Republic of China intervened, it announced that Taiwan would not be accepted with the name "Republic of China", its national anthem would not be heard and its athletes would not be allowed to parade under its flag, decisions that were entirely opposite to the fundamental Olympic Principle prohibiting racial, religious or political distinctions. The IOC thought of withdrawing its approval of the Montreal Games and certain NOCs, including the USOC, announced that they would withdraw from the Games if these did not have the approval of the IOC, applying political pressure on the Canadian government.

After a series of meetings, the Canadians accepted that the national anthem of Taiwan would be heard and that its athletes would parade under its flag, but yet again they could not utilise the name "Republic of China", a fact that the Taiwanese would not accept and therefore withdrew their delegation (Pound, 2012). Due to developments on the Taiwan issue, diplomatic relations between close allies US and Canada came to a head and temporarily were upset. In the aftermath of the Movement's new political defeat, Lord Killanin said: *"... we lost the battle! I believe that people are now disgusted with the interference of politicians in sport"* (Daniels, 1996, p. 90).

The issue of apartheid in South Africa did not leave the Montreal Games unaffected. The fact that certain New Zealand rugby teams had recently visited South Africa and competed in matches within its territories annoyed many African countries, 16 of which demanded that the IOC prohibit New Zealand

participation in the Games. Additionally, the South African Non-Racial Olympic Committee (SANROC) was established, an organisation whose main purpose was to isolate South Africa from any form of international games. Essentially, SANROC coordinated the African boycott of the Montreal Olympics. On its part, the IOC refused to ban New Zealand from participating in the Games, with the reasoning that rugby wasn't an Olympic sport. As a result, 18 African countries and 5 Arab countries carried out their threats and withdrew their delegations from the Games and, yet again, the athletes were called upon to pay the price by their non-participation in the greatest sporting event in the world. This time, the IOC withstood the blackmail by showing resolve, and thus came the first major boycott, the first major blow to the Games.

Memories of the terrorist attack in Munich were still very fresh, with the result that the Canadian government placed great significance on the issue of security at the Games, seconding approximately 16,000 police officers and army personnel to monitor all the grounds in and around the Olympic complex.<sup>147</sup>

At Montreal, the Soviet Union rose once again to the top of the unofficial medal table, followed by East Germany, a fact that the Soviets used once again to promote the superiority of their socio-political model versus that of western capitalism.

On the issue of defections, Montreal also had its own stories. One Soviet and three Romanians are said to have defected after the end of the Games. A fourth Romanian, diving athlete Sergei Nemtsanov, sought refuge for a while in Ontario, following a Canadian female diver, but soon revoked his defection and returned to his country.<sup>148</sup>

### **Moscow 1980: A punch at the underbelly of Olympism**

The most obvious and overt expression of exploitation of the Olympic Games for political purposes was undoubtedly the one in Moscow, in 1980, and in Los Angeles, which followed. The boycott of the Moscow Games by a large number of States that, through this extreme act of defying the Values of Olympism, sought to express their opposition to the purely political choices of the USSR, negatively marked the course of the Movement, which, nonetheless came out stronger. All boycotts that preceded that of Moscow, but also the terrorist attack in Munich, were motivated by international unrest caused by the foreign policy

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147 Olympic Review: Montreal 76, May-June 1976, p. 287.

148 <http://mentalfloss.com/article/31434/brief-history-olympic-defectors>

of the States, driven by the desire of the two poles, East and West, to impose their own political and economic agenda, with the use of weapons. The Montreal boycott was undoubtedly motivated by the racist policies of the colonized regions of Africa, but behind this move, one could easily discern the intention of the two worlds, East and West, to promote their own policies. The Games were now an easy global platform for demonstrating political power.

Awarding the XXI Games to Moscow also brought about the complete integration of the USSR into the Olympic Movement – into what the communists had initially referred to as the *“bourgeois expression of sports”*. As a reminder, Tsarist Russia had taken part in the Games in 1908 and 1912, but, after the 1917 Revolution, the Soviets had denounced all international sports events and abstained from them. After the war, they sent observers to the 1948 Games, in 1951 they formed their own Olympic Committee and in 1952 they participated in the Games for the first time. They wanted to change, and partly succeeded, the traditions in the structure of the IOC, demanding that those nominated by governments and not those chosen by the independent Institution be accepted as members, fully politicising its membership. They even tried to turn the IOC into a UN for sports, with the proposal, which fortunately did not pass, to include among its members, in addition to its permanent members, representatives from all Olympic Committees (Guttmann, 1984).

The ideological stand-off between East and West reached its zenith in 1980. In 1978, the Russians had supported a coup d'état in Afghanistan, which led to a destabilised and weakened government, against which a plethora of reactions had arisen. Towards the end of the following year, the USSR, in an attempt to stabilise to the region and maintain its position in the Middle East in general, enforced a military dictatorship on the country, an event to which the US reacted vehemently, along with other Western countries and many Muslim nations. The main American worry was the possibility that the Soviets would invade Pakistan, with which the US had a defence treaty, which they would be forced to uphold, at a risk of further scaling up tensions.

Jimmy Carter, the US President, immediately proposed a world-wide boycott of the Moscow Games (Hill, 1992). Even though such a thing might appear utopian, a possible postponement or withdrawal of the Games would have automatically meant: a) a US victory in the ideological war with the USSR, as the main target in the ongoing propaganda war between East and West was to make the opponent lose face and credibility; and b) a major defeat of the Olympic Movement. President

Carter had a very clear target in mind. He sought, through his actions, to take a very clear political stance, while indifferent to the cost to the Olympic Movement.

Baron Killanin of Galway, the IOC President, watched the White House effort without much concern. The Carter administration was *"doomed to failure"*. Speaking at the 82nd Session, in Lake Placid, in February 1980, he stated: *"... The only thing we can do is pray that the opposing sides will meet and resolve their differences so that we can avoid another holocaust. I have repeatedly attacked the chauvinism of certain aspects of the Olympic Games. We have not received support from those who like to publish results tables based on nations, instead of our rules, which State that the Games are a competition between athletes and not nations. Despite this, instances of nationalism are increasingly frequent, both in the opening and closing ceremonies and in the competitive field"* (Miller, 2019, p. 217).

The White House had no intention of consulting Killanin on their efforts, but there were a number of commentators in American media outlets, large and small, who knew this endeavour would fail. Harrison Dillard, who won four gold medals at the 1948 and 1952 Games in sprinting and hurdling events, denounced the idea early on: *"'Staging the various events in different cities is not only impractical but totally foreign to the Olympic concept', he explained in a Cleveland Press editorial. The idea of putting on alternate games subsidized by the United States is simply ridiculous on the face of it"* (Dichter & Johns, 2014, p. 340).

Even though approximately 50 governments supported the boycott, it was up to the theoretically autonomous NOC, whether or not to accept the IOC invitation to participate in the Games, a fact that, in several instances, created friction between various governments and their NOCs.

After the deadline of 20 February it had given for Soviet troops to withdraw from Afghanistan, the US government made its position in favour of the boycott absolutely clear and its intent to use all the necessary (peaceful) means at its disposal to achieve its aim. Carter's insistence on the boycott was such that, by the end of March, he had forbidden American companies from working with the USSR. The National Broadcasting Company (NBC), which was going to transmit the Games was forced to leave many millions of dollars' worth of equipment in Moscow. Fortunately, the IOC, despite its conservative structure, did not give in to this blackmail and fully supported the Institution, with more than 60 governments in favour of the boycott. The choice of the line to be followed by the Olympic Committees in each of these countries, was at their absolute discretion; they could accept or reject the invitation of the IOC to participate in the Games, which in

several cases led to serious friction between governments and their respective NOC.

The insistence of the American government that its country's team would not participate in the Moscow Games had an overall effect on American sports in general. Because the USOC is financed almost exclusively by corporate and individual donations, the government's decision resulted in major sponsors withdrawing their funding and, in general donations to fall to such an extent that it started to face financial problems. As the final decision would be taken by its House of Delegates, the Carter government attempted to ensure it had as many votes in its favour as possible. Finally, in April, despite the wishes of many federations and athletes to participate in the Games and, essentially, in violation of its own Charter, the USOC decided not to send an Olympic team to Moscow (Hill, 1992).



*Moscow 1980: the Greek flag enters first in the Olympic Stadium signaling a loud "NO" to the boycotting and the politicalization of the Olympic Games and the Olympic Idea.*

This decision was rewarded by the government as follows: a) federal funding to cover the debts of the Olympic Committee; b) tax relief for the sports federations; and c) fund raising programmes. The political pressure the Carter government was



in a position to bring to bear on the Olympic Committee could not be applied to American citizens and their media. Even though most were affected both by the government propaganda and the boycott itself, there were many who decided to go and attend the Games. However, there were also court battles between American citizens and athletes/members of the Olympic team against the USOC, which were settled out-of-court. *"Within the US, the propaganda in favour of the boycott was enormous, the result being that, in at least three polls by Newsweek, Washington Star and New York Times, more than 75% of the respondents were in favour of the "patriotic" abstention from the Games!"* (Hulme 1990, p. 36).

Hulme (1990, p. 30) also notes: *"...While the USOC initially supported exploring the possibility of staging a national sports festival as "a viable activity for our governing bodies and our athletes", a "counter-Olympics" never had any backing. A sports festival may have been no substitute for the Olympics, but at least it was a forum, in which competitions could be held without resulting in, as Donald Miller feared, a "schism... throughout the world (that) would be the demise of the modern Olympic Movement". USOC officials continued to endorse a national event, although somewhat tentatively, until mid-February when Robert Kane, USOC President, came out firmly against both a sport festival and an international competition. Characterising both as "disloyal" to the Olympic Movement, Kane stressed his personal conviction that, either US athletes would go to the Moscow Games or they would go to nothing at all. It was not, however, until early April that Kane's position was accepted by the USOC as an organisation. As Robert Helmick, President of the Amateur Athletic Union, correctly remarked: "For the athletes, there simply is no alternative to the Olympics".*

Sarantakes (Dichter & Johns, 2014, p. 350), describes the outcome of the confrontation between the US Administration and the Olympic Movement as follows: *"...the alternative Olympic Games might seem like a minor episode in the Cold War and Carter's administration, but it is nonetheless important for a number of reasons. First, it shows that culture matters in world affairs as do ideas. The leaders of the Olympic Movement were too attached to their creed to give up on it when their national governments decided it was in the interest of their nations to do so. With that point made, a second issue needs to be discussed: not all motivating factors are equal. Although the IOC has little power compared to that of a nation-State, much less one that is a major world power, the nature of its structure and the commitment of Olympians to the ideology and culture of their Movement was something that governments around the globe saw little need or inclination*

*to challenge. Culture and power collided in this affair, and while fear, honour, and interest had more sway, they were hardly absolute. Finally, while power is a crucial commodity in the affairs of nations, outcomes often are not simply a function of who is stronger or weak in certain resources."*

Calling for unity against the Soviet action in Afghanistan, the US government then sent messages to over 100 heads of State, urging them to support shifting the Games from Moscow. *"A conference of Islamic States, meeting at the end of the month, condemned the invasion of Afghanistan and supported a boycott of the Games if the Soviets refused to evacuate the country. France openly opposed even the thought of a boycott, but West Germany, the People's Republic of China, and Japan indicated they would consider cooperating"* (Senn 1999, p. 177) .

At the 82nd IOC Session, in Lake Placid, in February of the same year, a USOC delegation appeared at the General Assembly and tried to dissuade the IOC from supporting the Moscow Games. The USOC President, R. Kane, was strongly criticized by the overwhelming majority of the IOC members who took the floor. In fact, President Killanin was forced to remind Kane of the previous USOC stance, which was always against the boycott as a means of pressure used by the IOC on political issues, as well as that, in similar cases of US interference in the internal affairs of a country, such as when the US was entrusted with the Lake Placid Games, which went off without a hitch, they had agreed that politics should not interfere in the Olympic Movement! Kane tried to justify the USOC's stance as being the will of the American people but did not give convincing answers when asked why the US government and USOC itself had not objected to the participation of boxing and wrestling teams in Soviet Union competitions.<sup>149</sup>

In April of the Olympic year, all sides of the Movement met in Lausanne and strengthened the majority of States' resolve to ignore American boycott propaganda (Miller, 2019).

Although the US sponsored 1980 Olympic boycott was supported by a significant number of national governments, there was a number of NOCs that objected to their national governments' decision to boycott the Games, supporting the idea of explicit distinctions between sports and politics. Among other countries New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Puerto Rico, Switzerland, Finland, Italy, the Netherlands, Ireland, Great Britain and a few more decided to send either complete delegations marching under their NOC flags or individual athletes to

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149 Minutes of the 82nd IOC Session, 1980, Lake Placid.

the Moscow Olympics, marking an important success of the Olympic Movement's ideas over political exploitation of the Games.

Finally, on 21 July 1980, the XXII Games opened, with athletes participating from 80 Olympic Committees, while 66 boycotted the Games. Liberia marched in the opening ceremony as expected and departed on the following day. As a form of protest against the military invasion of Afghanistan by the USSR, 15 delegations marched with the Olympic flag instead of the flag of their own country.<sup>150</sup>

It wouldn't be excessive to claim that, at the time of the boycott of the Moscow Games, the reputation of the Olympic Movement was saved literally by the behaviour of most of the NOCs, particularly those of Europe. In Western Europe, even if the governments of the more powerful countries had not found a common path on this issue, mainly due to differing opinions on US foreign policy, almost all the NOCs showed a characteristic solidarity, supporting the IOC line and ignoring the cries concerning the purported safety of the Afghan people following the Soviet invasion. A case in point was the negative response of the British Olympic Committee following the decision of the Thatcher government to accede to the line taken by Carter and the USOC. The three great powers of what was then the Common Market, Germany, France and the United Kingdom, met on two occasions in order to arrive at a joint decision in favour of the boycott, which would also overwhelmingly define the positions of the remaining European governments, without finally managing to achieve this end, mostly due to the strong resistance by the French. This development left the initiative in the hands of the sports organisations, which, indubitably, wanted to send their athletes to the Games (Hulme, 1990). Several governments, even though they made statements in favour of the boycott, refused to compel their countries' Olympic Committees to follow the decision they had made. Besides the Olympic Committee of the Federal Republic of Germany, which followed the government line and took part in the boycott, others who were absent from the Moscow Games were the athletes of Norway, Monaco and Lichtenstein.

On an individual level, however, the Americans who were members of international federations lost a great deal of their credibility and, by extension, positions on the administrative boards of those organisations, a fact that automatically cost the country influence on the world sporting stage. The Australian Olympic Committee opposed the government line, which supported the Carter line, and participated

150 Andorra, Australia, Belgium, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Italy, Ireland, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Portugal, Puerto Rico, San Marino, Spain and Switzerland

in the Games, showing its support for the IOC and its Principles. A courageous decision that, together with that of the British Olympic Committee, showed how strong the Movement can be against policies for its exploitation. On the contrary, the Canadian Olympic Committee, under public pressure and the strong position of Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau, in favour of the boycott, who was initially opposed to the US line, eventually gave in and withdrew from the Games. In Asia, in general, the Olympic Committees supported the US boycott. Seventeen of them, including China and Japan, decided not to take part in the Games, not so much to follow the American political line, but because the Soviet invasion of an Islamic country was considered to offend their own religious identity. In Africa, despite the tendency of its governments to easily resort to a boycott, the US line was not given clear support (Hulme, 1990). Nevertheless, because the political lines of the African countries, depending on different parameters in each region, did not seem to agree in favour or against the boycott, they did not adopt a common approach. The majority, however, refused to follow the American policy, with the exception of Kenya, one of the major sports powers. The reaction of the countries of Central and Latin America was similar; their decision to follow or not the Carter line was based more on their domestic problems rather than on the conflict between East and West. Of the strong sports countries, Brazil, Mexico and Peru participated in the Games, while Argentina and Chile abstained (Hulme, 1990).

Ultimately, in this conflict, with the attempt to use the Olympic Movement as a vehicle of political strategy, the latter came out stronger. The Games were a success, although they went down in history as a prime example of political involvement in its goals and Principles. It is ironic that, in those days, the US government honoured all the members of its Olympic team, as if they had committed a heroic act, and at the same time tried to coordinate the staging of an alternative sporting event, to which, fortunately -though at the last moment - both the federations and the USOC reacted, and which never took place. This was another attempt of politics to influence the course of the Movement, which, however, fell into the void!

At the 83rd IOC Session, in Moscow, and before the start of the Games, the Committee elected its new President, Juan Antonio Samaranch, against three other candidates, from the very first round, with 44 out of 77 voters. This election meant to be the springboard of the Olympic Movement for a new era of realism, bold and high diplomacy, solid support for the Olympic Values and the development of the institution as a dynamic player on the chessboard of international politics with the aim of consolidating world peace.

As Pound (2004, p. 101) observes: *"...The Moscow boycott was as cynical a use of government power as I have ever experienced and did no credit to the leaders of many of the Western democracies. Not, I should say, to the media of these countries, who jumped on the issue with all the self-restraint of a sailor on shore leave. It was a classic case of a triumph of form over substance. I have considered the matter of Olympic boycotts on many occasions. The political objective of a boycott – a concerted action directed against a target – is to inflict some damage on the intended target of the boycott. Olympic boycotts have precisely the opposite effect. It is as if the political leaders are saying to the target that they are willing to inflict punishment upon themselves, through innocent Olympic athletes, who will be denied the opportunity to participate, in order to punish the target country"*.

### **Los Angeles 1984: Ludicrous reprisals**

It was certain that the boycott of the Moscow Games would create a heavy atmosphere for the next Games, all the more so because they were to be staged in the US. Although the Games were awarded to Los Angeles three years before Moscow, when there were still no shadows over the Olympic Movement with the abstention of 66 countries, in the intervening years up to 1984 tensions and excesses greatly marred the entire structure of international sport.

With the Montreal Games' financial disaster being a strong deterrent for Olympic bidding, the two main cities that had expressed interest in hosting the Games in 1984, were Los Angeles and Tehran. However, at that time, Iran was getting involved in a war with Iraq and the choice of Tehran did not appear very attractive. The Americans, aware that many cities were reluctant to host the Games, found themselves in a particularly strong negotiating position with the IOC. The IOC agreement with Los Angeles on the 1984 Games had been problematic from the very beginning. The American city had already failed twice to be awarded the Games (1976 and 1980). After the financial disaster in Montreal, the IOC demanded guarantees from the government and the corresponding Olympic Committee for the financial coverage of the Games and the State of California was already facing financial difficulties (Senn, 1999). While a successful entrepreneur, Peter Ueberroth, was chosen as the head of the Organising Committee (LAOOC), it seemed risky to entrust the entire endeavour to the private sector without the slightest public involvement.

Ueberroth presented a very ambitious budget for the Games. He calculated

the cost at \$ 500 million and a "surplus" (nowhere is the word "profit" mentioned) at \$ 20-50 million. As he himself argued from the beginning: "...our own Games will be the most economically successful Games ever" (Senn, 1999, p. 191). The result not only justified him, but the surplus was greater than anticipated. If the US government had allowed him to complete his work without intervening with wrong foreign policy choices, which led to the excuses given by the USSR for abstaining from the Games, the profit would have been even greater. Ueberroth, by virtue of the fact that Los Angeles was for the IOC the only solution for hosting the XXIII Games, managed to obtain two critical concessions from the Committee: a) the exclusive management of the advertising rights of the Games, which enabled him to attract corporate sponsorships on behalf of LAOOC and b) to negotiate the television broadcasting rights on behalf of LAOOC, which was, until then, within the IOC's powers.

With Ronald Reagan as President of the US, the climate between East and West did not appear to be changing for the better. Certainly, the Soviets had not forgiven the US boycott of the previous Games. At the 84th IOC Session, in Baden-Baden, the new IOC President, Samaranch, drew the attention of the Assembly members to the problems they were to face in the future: *"The Olympic Movement, in recent years, has survived storms that would sink any other ship. The enemy forces that have attempted to destroy its core are still out there. All athletes, coaches, sports leaders and journalists must stay united if we are to prevent them"* (Miller, 2019, p. 233).

The intention of the Soviets to use the Los Angeles Games as a venue for their retaliation for the 1980 boycott was evident from early on, despite the assurance given at the beginning of the Baden-Baden Session by the President of the USSR Olympic Committee, Ignati Novikov that they would participate in the Games. However, the statement by Andrianov, the IOC member for USSR, during the Session on *"ensuring freedom of entry and movement of members of the delegation and journalists in the Games by the US authorities"* left clear implications for the policy of the USSR that was to be followed until the Games (Miller, 2019, p. 236).

It all began in August 1983, with an event that was outside the sphere of sports, when a Korean passenger plane was brought down. President Ronald Reagan accused the USSR using very strong language in reference to it and making mention of the anti-Soviet sentiments held by American citizens. Ueberroth, sensing the impact this statement would have in the preparation for the Games and the reaction of the USSR, attempted to disconnect it from the content of the

Games, stating: *"Sporting events shouldn't be mixed up in the disagreements between governments. We are doing whatever we possibly can to stay out of international political conflicts"* (Vinikur, 1988, p. 122). As reported by Martin Barry Vinokur as early as 1982, the USSR Olympic Committee expressed its concern at whether the US government would comply with IOC regulations and, after sending a seven-member delegation to the American organisers, put forward some demands that would essentially become the basis of the negotiations. Thus, they asked to be informed of the following:

1. The accommodation cost of athletes in the Olympic Village;
2. The US government's position on whether the Olympic Accreditation would be sufficient for members of the delegation to enter the US;
3. Whether Aeroflot aircrafts would be allowed to land and take off in Los Angeles;
4. Whether they would be allowed to dock a Soviet ship in the port of Los Angeles.

The above demands were accompanied by reservations regarding the safe presence of the USSR sports team, especially after the demonstrations against the USSR by a group of people ideologically opposed to the communist regime in the country, called *"Ban the Soviets Coalition"*, who wanted the Soviets away from the Games. Following persistent and painstaking efforts by Ueberroth, these demands were accepted by the Organising Committee and the US government. Another event that further shattered relations between the two superpowers was the following. The Soviets wanted to place, as Olympic Attaché, as they were entitled, Oleg Yermishkin, who was a member of the KGB, a fact well known to the US counter-intelligence. *"Despite the assurances of Ueberroth that the matter would be settled, and he would be authorised to enter the US in order to serve the needs of the Soviet delegation, this authorisation was never given to him by the US Security Authorities. The fact that the issue took a negative turn was conveyed to the Soviet Union by the US State Department and not through LAOOC as required by the Olympic Protocol!"* (Hill 1992, p. 175). This was a pretext for the Soviets to state that they did not accept Ueberroth's assurances, since it was clear that the US government had poor relationships with him and wanted to take over the matter of the Games.

It is not hard to see that the Soviet insistence on placing Yermishkin in the position of Olympic Attaché was pre-planned so that it would not be accepted by the US, and therefore be used as an argument for the alleged lack of security of its

athletes, which led to its own boycott. But also, the way in which the US government services acted throughout the preparation of the Games, giving rights to the Soviets, was questionable.

Despite all the efforts of the Organising Committee to satisfy all the demands of the Soviets and to calm their concerns, they always found some excuse to avoid sending their team to Los Angeles. Their basic arguments were that, like in the past, many Soviet athletes would attempt to escape to the West, a defection which, they claimed, was encouraged by America, in order to be used in a propaganda war against the USSR (Onyestyák, 2008). Some of the security concerns of the Games have been appeased by the appointment of a former FBI agent as Director of Security. Rumours of potential protests by the large Chinese American community against the participation of the People's Republic of China in the Games did not come true. The security procedures for accessing the Games' venues were quite strict for all participants (from athletes to spectators) the result being that the Los Angeles Games are considered among the safest Games ever. (Kennelly & Toohey, 2007, pp. 8-9).

Finally, at the end of May, citing reasons of security and doubt as to the application of the IOC rules (!!!), the Soviet Union announced that it would not participate in the Games.

The USSR ultimately failed to convince the world of sport that the US could not, allegedly, deal decisively with the issue of the safety of the athletes and officials of their delegation and, therefore, the only NOC's that followed their abstention were those of its satellite States. Yugoslavia and Romania decided to send their athletes, whilst, for the first time after many years, the People's Republic of China also took part in the Games (Wilson, 2003). It appeared that the mutual rapprochement that had taken place between the US and China several years before, through ping-pong diplomacy, had finally borne fruit. The Soviet boycott of the Games, which was essentially the answer to what the Americans did four years before, showed once again that athletes are the ones who, at the end of the day, pay the price for this unacceptable tactic.

Several years later, Vitaly Smirnov, the second member of the IOC for the USSR, tried to correct things, recalling some details of the case and blaming the Kremlin for the abstention and not the Olympic Committee of his country: *"... In 1984 we had the opportunity to express an opinion, to some extent. My view was that we had to take part in the Games because, if we had not done so, we would have had nothing to gain. On the contrary, we would lose the political result of the sports heroes among the 600 young men and women, right where our ideological rivals were. Why*



*sacrifice athletes? This is interesting, the Olympic Committee said, but it had already been decided. I have to admit that in the USSR the issue of security was important. Even my mother asked me why I was going to Los Angeles! The Soviet decision on Los Angeles was built on a platform of lack of security that certainly did not involve the Olympic Committee, but the Kremlin".* However, this view seems to be largely refuted by a confidential document sent to the Central Committee of the Party on 29 April with the signature of Marat Gramov, President of the NOC, who, more or less, urged the Party to a decision to abstain: *"... participation should be prevented if hostilities do not stop; the abstention of the USSR and the developing countries will bring the first commercialised Games into economic crisis; the USSR Sports Committee considers it appropriate to actively continue the preparations... but if security conditions are not ensured by the US authorities, we will not participate in the Games"* (Miller, 2019, p. 236).

The Soviets' intent not to take part in the Games was clear and no special bibliography is required to establish that the excuse that there were insufficient security measures taken by the US government was not a true impediment to their presence in Los Angeles. What guarantees could the Americans have offered so that the people in charge of Soviet sports would feel safe? Already the Californian mega city had seen the early arrival of umpires, doctors and officials from Moscow without any upset whatsoever. What the Soviets did not hide, was the secret hopes they had that the Games would fail and along with them so would the financial construct built by a good businessman with the help of private initiative and, without even having the support of his own State, the services of which were doing everything they could to make the arrival of communists harder. The bureaucracy of American agencies is described in detail in *Made in America: His Own Story*, published by Ueberroth, in 1985. The American politicians first wanted to ensure the visibility of their country, through a perfectly organised sporting event such as the Olympic Games, which would not cost them a single dollar, would not subject them to the troubles that the presence of "communists" in their country would hold for them; while at the same time ensuring the sweeping of medals as an indication of the success of the *"most perfect system for the development of sports"*. Their clear indifference to whether or not the Soviets participated in the Games is even more apparent from an incident reported by Samaranch in his autobiography, published in 2003. When he met with President Reagan, at the White House, on the day of the Olympic flame's arrival in New York and conveyed to him the unpleasant news of the decision of the USSR and its allies

not to participate in the Games, at one point, the American President asked him *"How would you feel, Mr President, if I had written a letter to President Chernenko inviting him to stand with me on the podium at the opening ceremony of the Games?"*. Samaranch was thrilled and felt a little hope born in him. *"I congratulate you, Mr President," he said. "Your idea seems magnificent to me, and if you wish, I offer to take your letter to the Kremlin myself"*. Then, Secretary of State George Shultz intervened, saying meaningfully to the American President: *"Mr President, what you are proposing is best studied very thoroughly, because it depends on many other things ..."*. The clearest warning! (Samaranch, 2003, p. 187).

Of course, the abstention of athletes from the USSR and East Germany was an expected loss in terms of performance and results, but the effort made by Samaranch to persuade Yugoslavia, Romania and the People's Republic of China to participate in the Games filled this gap, but above all, it dealt a severe blow to the prestige of the USSR and the communist States that followed its line in a boycott that brought no benefit to its initiators.

Certain analysts claimed that, yet again, the Games had been used for indirect political statements, as both countries sought to show their desire for closer cooperation against what was now their joint rival, the USSR (Wilson, 2003). According to a recent financial study from the University of Oxford, Ueberroth organised great Games not only at the lowest cost in the history of the institution, but with a surplus of \$ 225 million, confirming the forecasts he made seven years before (Flyvbjerg, Stewart & Budzier, 2016).

The Moscow and Los Angeles Games were not only the subject of study by scholars, as to the significance and results of the two boycotts carried out for purely political reasons. They were also the subject debated by the members of the IOC in at least two Sessions, in 1984, in Los Angeles and Lausanne. Unfortunately, due to the limited space of this study, we cannot present the views expressed, the breadth with which the results of the two boycotts were examined and the ideological contradictions that emerged. Nevertheless, the composure and resolution of President Samaranch were decisive; not only did they save the Movement at this critical juncture, but they also showed his leadership skills.

Certain worries about the security of the Games were put at rest by placing a former FBI agent at the head of the Security Department. Rumours of potential protests by the expansive Chinese American community against the participation of the People's Republic of China in the Games turned out not to be true. The security procedures for entering the Games venues for all participants (ranging

from athletes to spectators) were quite stringent, which resulted in the safest Games that had ever been held (Kennelly & Toohey, 2007).

The Opening and Closing Ceremonies were particularly elaborate, showing how organising countries make use of them to highlight their nationalism but also their capabilities.

### **Seoul 1988: Political dipole ends**

Given the long conflict between North and South Korea, Seoul's chances of winning the bid against Nagoya, Japan, seemed slim. The IOC had already paved the way for the Games to be staged in that part of the world, so the withdrawal of the Melbourne and Athens bids was not unexpected. Nagoya's bid was undermined by its own residents, with strong protests against the event by activist organisations led by Masaji Kiyokawa (Hill, 1992). Despite the dangerous rivalry between South and North Korea and the apparent danger of terrorist attacks from the latter, the IOC decided to award the 1988 Games to Seoul. Under no circumstances, however, did they want the events in Mexico to be repeated, where the army had to intervene to suppress student demonstrations.

North Korean President, Kim Il Sung, annoyed by North Korea's rejection of a request to co-host the Games, moved surface-to-air missiles just 25 miles away from the Olympic Stadium and announced that his country would boycott the Games (Mechikoff, 2014). At the same time, he threatened to carry out terrorist acts to stop them, and the two great communist giants, Russia and China, intervened to calm the spirits and advised him not to interfere in the Games (Woong-Yong Ha, 1998).

The fact that these two countries, although ideologically in the same camp, but essentially rivals to each other, took a joint action to ensure the smooth staging of the Games, showed for a moment a willingness to set aside political expediencies, allowing Seoul to stage the global sport and cultural event without any problems. Fears of possible clashes between Japanese and Korean fans, due to the long and bitter rivalry between the two countries, were fortunately not confirmed. Inside South Korea, rival political parties agreed on a temporary truce so that they could work together for a better outcome.

In his introductory note to *Five Rings over Korea*, Pound (1994, introduction), describes the role of the IOC in this affair realistically: *"...the IOC had a vital and uncharacteristic, role to play in making the Games in Seoul both possible and successful. It was the IOC that had awarded the Games to Seoul, in 1981, This decision was regarded at best as risky and at worst as recklessly foolhardy, depending on*

*one's degree of optimism and place on the political spectrum. {...} Normally, the IOC would have concerned only with the physical preparation of the sport facilities and related matters, leaving political machination to the appropriate political organs. But faced with the prospect of the Games once again being politically damaged, and having relied on political figures, without success, to solve Olympic problems in the past, the IOC instead took a bold initiative and injected itself fully into the political process".*

Fortunately, in this instance, the IOC had at its head a President with notable ability, who skilfully brought to pass and handled a series of negotiations between North and South Korea, managing to carry off a difficult diplomatic endeavour. Leaving behind the tragic effects of the two previous boycotts, the two superpowers were once again confronted with each other at the Games, after 1976, creating a different atmosphere in the sports arena, but also in the political field, since the tactic of abstention did not bring them any political benefit. On the contrary, they had to bear the brunt of the grief caused to their athletes by depriving them of participation in this event for which they had been preparing for years.

The only countries which, despite the efforts of the IOC, decided to boycott the Games, were North Korea and its close allies, Cuba, Ethiopia, Albania and Seychelles.

The detailed developments in the run-up to the Games and during its staging, the pressure exerted by both sides and the content of the political discussions, are addressed extensively in Chapter "The Two Koreas" of Part 1 of this study and therefore it would be redundant to repeat them.

These Games were for Seoul an opportunity to reach the pinnacle of its efforts to be recognised as a full-fledged economic power and a serious international player. Undoubtedly, the South Korean leadership sought to accelerate its economic growth and promote national consciousness. However, preparing and hosting the Games had also a dramatic impact, both on South Korea's domestic policy and on its struggle for democratization, as well as on its foreign relations, in particular with North Korea and its former exclusive allies, the USSR and China. And finally, besides the economic benefits they gained, the deepest political legacy they left concerned national pride, collective memory and sports culture.

The Seoul Games marked the abolishment of the final elements of amateurism, as various countries started to give monetary rewards to athletes who won an Olympic medal or gained a place in the final.

The 1988 Seoul Olympics were the last of a series of events that put under severe strain the Olympic edifice. The display of ideological and political messages

in a field of global interest such as the sports arena, and the exploitation of the athletes' reputation and performance, spanned over more than 40 difficult years—from the end of World War II to the fall of the Berlin Wall—before returning to a new starting point, completely different but of equal importance to that of Coubertin.

## 22. The Olympiads of the new era

**Barcelona 1992 - Atlanta 1996 - Sydney 2000 - Athens 2004 - Beijing 2008 - London 2012 - Rio 2016**

In November 1989, in a festive atmosphere on the west side of Berlin, the famous "*Berlin Wall*" fell and with it a whole world that was hidden behind it. The political scene changed dramatically, involving in this change the microcosm of sport, which found itself abruptly, and not gradually, far from the political grip of the Cold War East-West confrontation. One could characterise this change as of equal importance with that experienced by the Olympic Movement during the interwar period and after World War II. No one could imagine what would happen a few months after the end of the 1988 Seoul Games and throughout the Barcelona Olympiad. The long-held assumptions about the permanence of the political arrangements brought about by the end of World War II, proved to be groundless. Not a single political scientist had predicted the collapse of the communist edifice, nor how rapid it would be. As it turned out, despite the enormous efforts made by its governments, the Soviet Union and its empire failed to preserve the common ideological identity it sought to establish with its satellite allies, based on the common goal of resistance to capitalism and its material wealth. It turned out that the post-war division of Germany into East and West was not based on a solid foundation, despite the efforts of the German Democratic Republic's governments to create a "*real*" East Germany defined by its excellence in international sport.

The gradual and bloody breakup of Yugoslavia left its mark in the field of sport, with athletes previously competing under the flag of Yugoslavia, now appearing as rivals, under different flags, many of them unable to contain the hatred they felt for decades, forgetting that they had played with each other as friends, in common neighbourhoods and schools.

Similarly, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, in December 1991, and the independence of a number of "*occupied*" States, forced the IOC to proceed swiftly with the recognition of the new Olympic Committees, so that athletes from

these countries could be invited to participate in the 1992 Barcelona Games. Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania, whose independence was recognised by Gorbachev, in August 1991, already had a recognised Olympic Committee before World War II, which also operated at the time of their occupation by the Soviet Union. But the other new countries that emerged after the dissolution of the former Soviet Union, had to wait until the next Olympics to appear separately. At the 1992 Albertville Winter Games and the Barcelona Summer Games, athletes from all these countries participated as one “unified team” under the Olympic flag.

A new era for international sport and the Olympic Movement had emerged; largely free of the pressing presence of political expediency and the exploitation of the Games to promote the ideological and economic-political interests that developed after World War II.

### **Barcelona 1992: Dawn of a new era for the Olympic Movement**

At the 91st IOC Session, in Lausanne, in October 1986, Barcelona, the birthplace of Samaranch, was chosen to host the 1992 Games, winning over strong candidates such as Amsterdam, Belgrade, Birmingham, Brisbane and Paris. In the second round of the bidding process, Barcelona gathered the absolute majority of votes (47) against Paris (23), Brisbane (10) and Belgrade (5). President Samaranch did not vote at any stage of the process.<sup>151</sup> The great success of Los Angeles, in 1984, dispelled fears that the organisation of the Games would lead the host city to financial ruin, and since then, the number of bidding cities is more than three, allowing the IOC to choose the one that offers the best guarantees for their sound organisation. As it was to be expected, the issue of the advantages obtained by Ueberroth as head of the single bid for the Los Angeles Games, namely the exclusive management of advertising and television rights, was raised again in the IOC, which decided to grant only part of these rights to the host cities.

The new international political environment also created a new dynamic in the Olympic Movement, which was approached by Samaranch with caution and reservation. In his speech at the 97th IOC Session, in Birmingham, in June 1991, without referring to his own political intervention in the Korean Peninsula case in 1988, Samaranch tried to keep a low profile concerning the dramatic developments in Europe following the collapse of communism, claiming that the IOC does not engage in politics *“The recent turmoil in the world is the cause of serious problems that the IOC will have to face ... we must not run ahead of political developments*

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<sup>151</sup> Minutes of the 91st IOC Session, 1986, Lausanne.

... and we never intervene directly in politics" (Senn, 1999, p. 239).

In the midst of this new scenario, which included the change in the political situation in South Africa, with Nelson Mandela now leading the country, South African athletes returned to the Games for the first time since 1960. But even Germany, which had been united since 1990, now returned with a team under the flag of the Federal Republic of Germany, something that Brundage had been trying to achieve for many years, but to no avail.

The breakup of the Soviet Union, which marked the end of the Cold War, was accompanied by the independence of several former Soviet States. Even though the case for Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania was simple for the IOC, as we have already noted, other States could not immediately join the IOC, because they first had to create their own NOC. They thus accepted to appear under the IOC flag as a *"Unified Team"*.<sup>152</sup> The breakup of the former unified Yugoslavia gave rise to the independent countries of Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Slovenia, which took part in the Games with their own distinct teams, but the new State of Serbia alongside Montenegro and FYROM, were forced to be present as a group of *"Independent Olympic Participants"* under the Olympic flag. All these changes that took place within two years before the Barcelona Games, caused President Samaranch to declare happily that: *"...the IOC feels the effect of the wind of freedom blowing on our planet; a phenomenon the IOC always sought to create"* (Wakefield, 2014, p. 98). With these reorganisations, the use of the Games for political purposes lessened dramatically and Coubertin's vision appeared, finally, to be almost ready to come to pass. The Barcelona Games were deemed historic, but this time for all the right reasons! (Mechinkoff, 2014).

The widespread concerns that the Basques, who sought independence from Spain, would cause problems during the Games, were not confirmed. Except for a car bomb attack, six months before the start of the Games, on civil guard barracks in the city of Vic, Catalonia, in which 10 civilians were killed, no other incidents occurred throughout the event.<sup>153</sup> To this day, the Barcelona Games are considered the most peaceful ever held, with no political interference or social issues. It is worth noting that these Games were the first smoke free in modern history (Kennelly & Toohey, 2007). Nevertheless, and because Catalonia had its own distinctive traditions, different from Madrid's, the Catalans filled the streets of Barcelona with

152 Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine Uzbekistan and Russia.

153 <https://www.foxnews.com/story/timeline-major-eta-attacks-in-spain>

their own flags, but not inside the Olympic stadium where the Spanish flags waved (Senn, 1999).

Following the Barcelona Games, political interventions in the Olympic Movement started to decline. The change that took place in the former Eastern bloc played a major role in weakening the desire to promote political or ideological positions through the Olympic Games.

### **Atlanta 1996: Too much noise for nothing**

Atlanta, USA, was the city selected by the majority of IOC members to host the Centennial Games, celebrating 100 years after the first 1896 Athens Olympic Games. The responsibility of the Olympic Movement for this symbolic anniversary was great. However, there was also a great responsibility for the city that had the honour of organising these Games.

Along with other serious contenders,<sup>154</sup> Athens had entered the fray to host the Games with great hopes on account of their symbolic anniversary significance, as well as wide ranging popular acceptance by the Greek public. The attraction was also considerable for the leaders at the time, who invested heavily in the importance of the 1996 Olympic Games. Although the Official Bid for the Games was impeccably prepared, under the guidance of the late architect and town planner, George Kandilis, the corruptive influence of internal politics considerably diminished the persuasiveness of the project. At the time, the entire Greek political world considered the candidature as a great opportunity for self-promotion and this was evident at every step of the proceedings. However, since the leaders of political factions are usually far removed from Olympic events, they could not understand that the more they interfered in the management of the candidature, the more they reduced the Athenian chances of success. Even the rhetoric that accompanied the bid was trivial and mired in the past, as well as the constant reminders to the IOC membership of Ancient Greece, Greek culture and the "*obligation*" on the part of the Movement to select Athens to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first modern Olympic Games!

One of the most important arguments used by the Atlanta Bid Committee was that the city was predominantly inhabited by various ethnic minorities, highlighting the multifaceted importance of the Games for the Movement (Meckikoff, 2014). Unfortunately, the persistence of the Organizing Committee (ACOG) to promote commercial interests during the Games in order to relieve its financial burden, the

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154 Atlanta, Melbourne, Toronto, Manchester and Belgrade.



conflict of interests between ACOG and the city's municipal authority, the complete absence of government participation as required by the organisers and the lack of serious transportation and IT planning, seriously affected the overall operation of the project, with the result that these Games went largely unnoticed, failing to reflect the symbolic anniversary. The attempt of ACOG's President, Billy Pane, to imitate Ueberroth did not succeed!

Samaranch (2002, p. 314), mentions in his book: *"... it is very strange: every time we organise Games in the USA, the richest country in the world, we stumble upon difficulties. The reason is that the project's financing and the Committee's resources are private. Los Angeles was a unique experience; excellent I would say. Since then, the organisation of the Games has become more complex and has changed significantly. Nowadays, it is inconceivable to organise the Olympic Games without the active support of the government of the respective country, as well as of the Municipality that hosts them"*.

Athletes from 197 NOCs, a number higher than the 185 UN member States of the time, participated in the Games.

### **Sydney 2000: The clean Games**

There was no lack of problems at Sydney. The old and particular problem with Australia, with its aboriginal populations, gave rise to certain small-scale protests. Various aboriginal leaders attempted to utilise the Games to highlight their plight to the world, to gain recognition from the State and to gain equal rights with other Australians. Their issue became well known throughout the world, not through their protests, but mainly through the achievements of one woman. Cathy Freeman, Olympic gold medallist at the women 400m and final carrier of the Olympic flame who lit the torch at Sydney stadium, after refusing to make any form of protest during the Games, with her exceptional behaviour and stance, managed to make many people throughout the world more aware of the plight of Australian aboriginals (Watts, 2002).

Despite the fact that they competed as separate nations, at the Opening Ceremony, North and South Korea marched in together, under the joint name "Korea", giving rise to hopes that someday in the future they might be reunited. There were 10,651 participating athletes from 199 NOCs and almost 3.5 billion television viewers tuned in to watch them, confirming yet again the immense value of the Games (Korporaal, 2000).

The city's authorities received a plethora of terrorist threats every day, but none

were actually carried out. A month before the Games began, the New Zealand authorities announced that they had managed to neutralise a group of terrorists, which had intended to blow up the sole nuclear reactor in Australia, which was located in a suburb of Sydney (Kennelly & Toohey, 2007). This form of displaying ideological messages belonged to the past.

### **Athens 2004: Back home**

The unprecedented Al Qaeda attack on the World Trade Center, in New York, in 2001, was the beginning of a new form of international terrorism, in its greater part impersonal and without limits. Athens had already started preparing to welcome thousands of athletes and hundreds of thousands of spectators in the greatest sports and cultural event in the modern history of Greece, when it found itself in the middle of this maelstrom.

Athens' bid for the 2004 Games was prepared and carried out without any intervention by the government or other political forces in its operation. A select team with a professional approach, led by Gianna Angelopoulou-Daskalaki, a forceful personality with means, pursued the "*Athens 2004*" bid and ensured its success. Thankfully, the government ceded to agreed with her intransigent stance and did not get involved in the structure and operation of the Bid Committee, which in turn, presented a strategic plan for carrying out the Games, which was ambitious, but also exceptionally realistic. The message conveyed in the bid was not about the past and the philosophy of the Games in antiquity. It pertained to the future of Greece and what staging these Games would leave as a legacy to their "*home*".

Athens competed with Stockholm, Istanbul, Buenos Aires, Cape Town and Rome. Gianna Angelopoulou struck the right tone and conveyed well-put-together key messages. The strategic low-key approach, alongside a good reading of the IOC members' sentiments, helped Athens prevail over the arrogance and ostentation of Rome, its main rival. Therefore, with a record difference of 25 votes, the 106th IOC Session, in Lausanne, awarded the 2004 Olympic Games to Athens, the smallest city in the history of the Games to undertake this major endeavour.

As politics can never be missing from any event, sometimes in the form of international interference and sometimes in the form of domestic interference, in the event of Athens, the government of Kostas Simitis, six months after the triumph in Lausanne, decided not to assign the preparation and organisation of the Games to Angelopoulou, but to other persons, unrelated to the Olympic

Movement and Greek sports. The reasons were obvious, but few remember them today. The success of a small team headed by a woman that was not supported by the central government, but exclusively by private initiative, had bothered many people. As was to be expected, this first Organising Committee failed completely in its work and in the 48-month period of its involvement in this huge wager for the country, it did not manage to convince the IOC and President Samaranch, who demanded Simitis bring back the President of the completely successful Bid Committee, as President of the Organising Committee for Athens 2004 Olympic Games. Thus, the new Committee had to implement in 4 years' time, what other Olympic cities completed in 7 years!



*Athens 2004: The Olympic Games back home.*

Under the guidance of Angelopoulou, the Organising Committee ensured that there was no government interference in its work and worked effectively within the given time frame and the given budget, managing to organise the best Games. It was the first time, since the successful staging by Peter Ueberroth, in Los Angeles, in 1984, that the Games were left in the hands of private initiative, with State support being limited to the structures of the requisite sports venues and other urban projects for redevelopment of Attica and other areas of Greece, as these had been specified in the Host City Contract with the IOC.

In the midst of the preparation, the 9/11 terrorist attack in New York changed the security specifications used internationally up to that time. Islamic fundamentalism and its fanatic followers continued the terrorist attacks against Israel and Western countries, culminating this time with the blowing up of a train in Madrid and the death of approximately 200 people.

The international political environment with Sudan and Somalia being ravaged by civil wars, the further worsening of the situation in the Middle East and the fact that Athens was located quite close to Iraq and Palestine, increased the fears of experts about a possible terrorist attack during the Games. Moreover, it was a well-known fact that many different terrorist groups had operated in Greek territory over many years, the most important being “17 November”. In June 2002, a mistake of this organisation resulted in the arrest of almost all its leaders and operatives, something that was welcomed with great relief both domestically in Greece and internationally.

Nevertheless, in this negative international climate, a lot of people were afraid that Athens may possibly be the target of a terrorist attack, a view that ended up costing the Organising Committee a great deal, because: a) in the Games Security sector, a lot more people had to be employed than initially calculated (in total approximately 45,000 persons were employed) (Kennelly & Toohey, 2007), b) the arrival of spectators from abroad was not in line with expectations, as those who had initially tied up a large number of tickets, finally decided not to come to Athens after 9/11, resulting in a sizable cut in the budgeted revenue for the Committee; and c) the expense budgeted by the government, albeit unrelated to the Organising Committee, increased significantly, greatly changing the action plan and the means to be deployed.

The IOC was greatly criticised, especially in the media, for awarding the Games to such a small country with many social and urban problems, which would have to dispense huge amounts for a sports event that lasted 17 days, whilst with the same money, it could have improved if not resolved these problems. The international image of Greeks was greatly affected by the delays observed in the progress of the Olympic projects, caused by an initially weak Organising Committee that was most certainly leading the country to failure. After the elections held in the year 2000, Prime Minister Kostas Simitis asked Angelopoulou to become the President of the Organising Committee, with a new composition, which would complete the preparation and stage the Games. The “Iron Lady”, as many liked to call her, aided by an effective Chief Operating Officer (COO), Marton Simitsek (Szymiczek), the son

of the late IOA Dean, Otto Szymiczek, and a set of capable executives in all sectors of organisation and very dedicated volunteers, managed to deliver the project in a properly prepared and carried out fashion, completely changing how Greece was viewed and leaving behind the best of impressions in participants and visitors

A Worldwide Torch Relay was organised for the first and only time in Athens, which travelled to all 5 Continents and ended up in Athens, in a symbolic effort to promote world peace and friendship.

In contrast with other Olympiads, that of Athens did not cause external political interference or occasional political exploitation, terrorist acts or a demonstration of specific ideological propaganda, in the period from being awarded the Games until their completion. Nevertheless, there was no lack of domestic political exploitation of the fact, by those who were against the staging of the Games in Athens and the Olympic Movement in general. A few years after the end of this important event and just before the great economic crisis in Greece, a part of the opposition, mainly left wing, attempted to denigrate the size of the Games' success, on the pretext that excessive amounts were spent on their preparation and implementation. Some sports facilities that had unacceptably remained without being used by successive governments after the end of the Games (known as "*white elephants*" in the terminology of the Olympic Movement) gave substance to their argument. Even though their number is small compared to the total number of venues used to date, either by the private, or public sector, the image they present dishonours the great work carried out during the Games.

According to detailed data that the Ministry of Finance submitted to the Greek Parliament following two relevant interpellations by left wing parliamentarians, which were widely publicised, not only did the Games not have a negative economic result, but, quite the opposite, they generated significant "*tangible*" benefits, besides the recognised "*intangible*" ones.

The total cost of the Games was € 8,5 billion, out of which € 2,0 billion was the budget of the Organising Committee, where the State had no contribution at all. On top, the Organising Committee having had a surplus of € 130 million, allocated this amount to the State. It is worth noting that in the € 6,5 billion of the State expenditure, were included various expenses not directly related to the Games, such as the State participation in the creation of a new and modern road network with major motorways and the Athens International Airport construction, the new Athens Metro, the suburban railway, the unification of the archaeological sites in Athens, the implementation of contemporary systems for State security and other expenses,

basically of urban interest, in various Olympic or non-Olympic cities.

All of the foregoing have been set out in detail in various scientific studies that were involved in the subject.<sup>155</sup>

It would not be far from the truth if one described the Athens Games as a repetition of the successful 1984 Los Angeles Games. Both are positive examples of the effectiveness of the private sector. In fact, in the case of Athens, the solidarity, unity and consistency shown by all groups of the population, underlined how successful such national endeavours can be, since they improve the life of citizens and secure international recognition.

Despite this, no government that came into power after the Athens Games or the Hellenic Olympic Committee publicly congratulated the Organising Committee on the success of this endeavour, something which, unfortunately, is a worldwide negative originality! Only the then President of the Republic, Konstantinos Stephanopoulos, and the Mayor of Athens, Dora Bakoyannis, in a special ceremony awarded, the President of "Athens 2004" Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki and through her, the members of the Organising Committee, for their contribution to the success of the Games.

Although at the Athens Games there were no incidents of political or ideological intervention, an extreme action of an athlete could have been characterised as an isolated act of political fanaticism; however, it did not spoil the peaceful image of the Olympics and was little known to the general public. The Iranian judoka Arash Miresmaeili was disqualified for weighing in at nearly four pounds above the limit for his weight class of his under-66 kilograms match against an Israeli opponent, Ehud Vaks, in the first round. It was claimed Miresmaeili had gone on an eating binge to protest the IOC's recognition of the State of Israel. Miresmaeili's actions won praise from Mohammad Khatami, the country's President at the time, who was quoted as saying Miresmaeili's actions would be "*recorded in the history of Iranian glories*". He was later awarded \$125,000 by the Iranian government - the same amount given to Olympic gold medallists!!!

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155 "The impact of the 2004 Olympic Games on the Greek Economy" (2015) by the Foundation for Economic & Industrial Research, which indicated that the Games had a positive financial result, the Oxford Olympics Study 2016: "Cost and Cost Overrun at the Games" (Flyvbjerg, Stewart & Budzier), which indicated that the Athens Games were the least expensive in the history of the Institution, after Los Angeles in 1984, or the relevant comprehensive research (in Greek) by Petros Synadinos and Nikos Choutas (2016) "Athens 2004": Evaluating the Ramifications of the Games in the Greek Society and the Greek Economy – Truths and Myths".

### Beijing 2008: Controversial choice

The selection of Beijing by the IOC General Assembly, in July 2001, to host the 2008 Games, came as no surprise to the Olympic Movement. Everyone believed that the most populous country in the world was “entitled” in some way to organise this great sporting / cultural event. The fact that, as early as 1993, it had lost the opportunity to gain the trust of the IOC members by just two votes, gave Beijing a significant advantage over Toronto, with Beijing having more than twice the number of votes (56 against 22) already at the second round.

China is one of the most financially powerful countries in the world, which it sought to showcase through the Games. Despite all its economic might, however, there were many improvements to make in the human rights sector and in basic freedoms. The IOC was sharply criticised for this selection, which was credited to President Samaranch, who sought to give the Games to a country that needed an opportunity to show it was willing to make changes.

According to Wassong (2009, p. 12) “... Chinese Government attitudes to utilize the Olympic Games as a means of propaganda were widely debated by scholars and journalists alike as Beijing 2008 approached. Was China planning to use the Games in a bid to demonstrate their growing national strength and emergence as a superpower? The discussions reached their height when direct comparisons were made with the 1936 Berlin Games. Those Games remain the most striking example of how the Olympic Games were politically utilized by nationalistic politics. The Beijing Games also drew attention to the fact that an Olympic event was in big danger of being “misused” as a platform for political protest”.

Nevertheless, the decision to attribute the 2008 Games to Beijing was met with great reservations. Many feared that they would be used by China as a mean of promoting its growing political power. The comparison with the respective Games in Berlin was inevitable. Others expressed their concern that during the opening and closing ceremonies or during the awarding of medals ceremony, the Olympic family might experience a repetition of the activist action by the American athletes, in Mexico, in 1968. On the eve of the Olympic Games the IOC stressed that it would look carefully at how the athletes behaved. There was a move to exclude any athlete who used the medal podium or Olympic Village for protests and IOC President, Rogge, indicated that such protests would be considered unacceptable in his press briefing on the eve of the Games (IOC Press conference, Beijing, 2 August 2008) (Wassong, 2009).

The Chinese promised the IOC that there would be unlimited media access for

the international press throughout the Games, but this promise was not upheld. Additionally, concerning the issue of public demonstrations, China promised to create specially designed areas where, after applications to protest were approved, various groups could protest there without hindrance. None of the 77 applications submitted were accepted (Mechikoff, 2014).

The greatest challenge was a protest by Tibetans (Burns, 2008). Tibet had been conquered by China, in 1950, and since then had been considered by the Chinese as one of their territories, a view not accepted by the Tibetans, who frequently protested, often violently. At the start of 2008, the Chinese authorities required Tibetan monks to deny their spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama. Reactions to this were strong and violent episodes did not take long to occur. Many supporters of a free Tibet, as well as many opponents of Chinese domestic and foreign policies, attempted to impede the process of the torch relay in various countries around the world. Additionally, a group of Americans, who attempted to protest in favour of a free Tibet in Beijing during the Games, were arrested and deported (Mechikoff, 2014).

Celebrities, like Mia Farrow, protested against China's stance as regards Darfur, Tibet and Myanmar, but, as Rogge stressed: *"...would any cause, be it Darfur, be it human rights, be aided by a boycott? On the contrary, the Games will open up China, being under the scrutiny of 25,000 media representatives. We will witness changes in Chinese society"* (Miller, 2019, p. 409).

The legal advisor to the IOC, François Carrard, said: *"...some people say, because of serious human rights issues, we close the door and say no. The other way is to bet on openness. Bet on the fact that in the coming seven years, openness, progress and development in many areas will be such that the situation will be improved. We are taking the bet that seven years from now, we will see many changes". On the same note, Jacques Rogge, (the later IOC President), stated that: "...I believe that with this message the IOC wanted to open the doors to a country that represents one quarter of mankind and which has never organised the Games"*.<sup>156</sup>

There were many State leaders present in Beijing to enjoy the Opening Ceremony of the Games. One of them was the President of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, who had refused to hand over power after losing the previous elections, infuriating the world community. When this became known, he was told by both

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<sup>156</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2001/07/14/sports/olympics-beijing-wins-bid-for-2008-olympic-games>.



the IOC and the Chinese government that he was not welcome in China and he was deported.<sup>157</sup>

Shortly before the Games commenced, the Iraqi team were banned from the Games, as the country's government had intervened in the procedures of the NOC and had replaced all its members with their own people, something that the IOC did not find acceptable. A deal was finally arrived at and the Iraqi athletes managed to take part.

Despite the fact that IOC and UN attempts to implement an international Olympic Truce, having gained the support of many well-known political figures, at the crucial time this collapsed with the attack that Russian military forces carried out against Georgia, campaigning against rebels in South Ossetia, which was a province of Georgia. The Russians supported the union of South Ossetia with North Ossetia, which belonged to Russia and sought a pretext to intervene and crush the Georgian military. Tensions between Russia and the US, which was an ally of Georgia, were heightened, without any further conflict arising from this or events coming to a head (Schwartz, Barnard & Chivers, 2008). A new round of the Cold War was very close to begin, but it was clear that times had changed and fortunately, cooler heads prevailed, thus avoiding a further deterioration in the relations between the two superpowers.

Finally, the 2008 Beijing Games were remarkable, without any terrorist threats or noisy protests from Tibetans. Only the Torch relay was disturbed at certain points in its long course, but without consequences and without altering its authenticity.

### **London 2012: Tranquillity**

In the 117th IOC Session, in Singapore, the city of London managed with great difficulty to prevail and secure the preference of the IOC members against Paris, Madrid, Moscow and New York.<sup>158</sup> With 54 votes in its favour (compared to 50 votes for Paris), London became the first city in the history of the Movement to host the Olympic Games for the third time – after 1908 and 1948. Those of 1908 went down in history as uneventful from a political standpoint, against the peaceful backdrop of Europe in the beginning of the 20th century, whilst the 1948 Games were full of incidents of political interference and post-war messages. In 2012, London experienced the Olympic atmosphere without any political or ideological

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<sup>157</sup> <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/mugabe-barred-from-olympics-as-the-chinese-bow-to-pressure-6933425.html>

<sup>158</sup> Minutes of the 117th IOC Session, 2005, Singapore.

disturbance, sealing Rogge's ten-year term as President of the IOC, without any undesired interference during the three Olympiads of his term. The following year, Dr Thomas Bach took over at the helm of the Movement.

In Athens, Beijing and London, the Games were staged without incident as regards their political exploitation, because the serious problems that the Movement would go on to face would pertain to its internal management and the interpretation of the Values of Olympism, such as fair play and respect of diversity. In recent years, the IOC members were involved with tackling doping, sexual orientation and the acceptance or not of religious and social specificities, in an effort to find the most acceptable solutions.

A day before London was awarded the Games, a bomb exploded in the city, with many innocent victims, causing the impression that this practice would threaten the smooth staging of the Games. However, nothing happened during the Games – there was no civil unrest and no political interference to mar the Games.

Had the Games ceased to be a field of political opposition? Perhaps the interest to promote political and ideological tensions had found another field of expression, more effective than the peaceful celebration in sports? Indeed, the Rio Games that ensued, showed that as regards the political exploitation of the Games, we appear to be heading towards safer harbours.

### **Rio de Janeiro: The Movement in the middle of an introversion turbulence**

In October 2009, at the 121st IOC Session, in Copenhagen, Rio de Janeiro managed to easily prevail over the other candidate cities, namely Madrid (for yet another time), Tokyo and Chicago and to be awarded the 2016 Games. With more than double the votes secured by Madrid (66 versus 32), Brazil went down in history as the first Latin American country that would have the privilege of staging Olympic Games, as Mexico that had preceded it, is considered to belong to Central America.<sup>159</sup>

Most IOC members regretted their vote, as the Rio Games cost the organisation more than had been estimated, but the organisation was quite good. Various manifestations of students and other protesters against the political situation in Brazil shook up Rio and other cities, shook up the IOC and the friends of the Movement, bringing to mind events in Mexico. Nevertheless, during the Games themselves, their visitors did not feel a real threat.

However, the fact that made these Games special was the policy of the IOC

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159 Minutes of the 121st IOC Session, 2009, Copenhagen.

President Bach towards the problem of the refugees caused in recent years by the crisis in Europe. In the past, athletes who had been uprooted from their conflict-ridden homelands, could not participate in the Games, as they could not be integrated within an NOC.<sup>160</sup>

It was October 2015, at the UN General Assembly, that the IOC created the Refugee Olympic Team (ROT) - the first of its kind – to take part in the 2016 Rio Games. The IOC formed the ROT to increase awareness for the refugee crisis and improve attitudes towards refugees, confronted with the global refugee crisis that has seen millions of people in the world displaced. As IOC President stated: “... ROT, will be a symbol of hope for all refugees in the world and will make the world better aware of the magnitude of this crisis. It is also a signal to the international community that refugees are our fellow human beings and are an enrichment to society These refugee athletes will show the world that despite the unimaginable tragedies that they have faced, anyone can contribute to society through their talent, skills and strength of the human spirit”.<sup>161</sup>

In May 2016, the IOC created a team of 43 refugees, out of whom 10 were considered able to participate symbolically in the Games. Ten months on from that announcement at the UN General Assembly, the athletes, who originally hailed from Ethiopia, South Sudan, Syria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, were ready to compete in Brazil, alongside 11,000 fellow athletes, sending a message of hope and inclusion to millions of refugees around the world and inspiring the world with their strength.

It was at the 46th IOC Session, in Oslo, in 1952, that the issue of the participation at the Helsinki Games of political refugees from the countries of the Eastern bloc countries, was first raised, by Thomas Marffy-Mantuano, representative of the Union of Free Eastern European Sportsmen (UFEES), based in New York. However, the IOC Session rejected the request, most probably due to the political tension that had emerged in the eastern countries that were part of the Soviet sphere of influence.<sup>162</sup>

As described in previous chapter,<sup>163</sup> the IOC's decision to foster solidarity towards political refugees, with the participation of a separate team in the Olympic Games under its flag was equally important and constitutes clear proof of the Olympic Movement's potential to be a key soft power for political intervention in international developments. It shows a modern and different approach the Olympic Movement

160 <https://www.bbc.com/sport/olympics/35710578>

161 <https://library.olympics.com>

162 Minutes of the 46th IOC Session, 1952, Oslo.

163 “The Olympic Movement as a soft power in the context of international diplomacy” (p. 142)

has facing political issues; a decisive approach that it would have hesitated to display in the past.

The IOC's decision to set up ROT is historic, not only because it has overcome past scruples and evasiveness, but also because since the participation in the Olympics of a group of athletes from different countries, who have been considered unwanted or have voluntarily left them for political reasons, comes into direct conflict with the Statutory provisions of the Olympic Charter, which recognizes as eligible for participation in the Games, only athletes representing recognized NOCs by the IOC.



The Refugees Olympic Team parades during the opening ceremony of the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games.

Pere Miro (2021, p. 272) considers this accomplishment as one of the most successful cases in terms of global diplomacy in sport: *"...this team devised and created by the current IOC President, Thomas Bach, who always personally supported sports diplomacy in the majority of the cases mentioned before, aimed to give attention to the global humanitarian crisis of the refugees. Sports diplomacy was key, as it required the IOC's and UNHCR's united efforts through a real partnership to get a group of 10 refugee athletes to participate in the Olympic Games Rio 2016. We also needed the clear commitment of the countries of origin of these refugees, as we did not want to convert something that was meant to raise*

*positive attention into shining a spotlight on the national conflicts of the countries of origin. Lastly, we also needed the cooperation of the NOCs of the refugee athletes' host countries, as those NOCs helped with the organisation of the team delegation and their participation in the Games."*

This unique project demonstrates the IOC's commitment to stand with refugees and support them through sport, and it also shows how Olympic Solidarity, through its Refugee Athlete Support Programme, helps refugee athletes not only to train with the aim of qualifying for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games, but also to continue their sporting career and build their future.

*"Once again, the Movement faced the problem of a number of its members being bribed, as had been the case during the years 1998-2002, which resulted in many of them who were in breach of their duty to be made to stand down"* (Miller 2019, p. 325). The Vice-President of the IOC and President of the European Olympic Committees, Patrick Hickey, was arrested and indicted for participation in ticket touting in relation to the Games,<sup>164</sup> and Carlos Nuzman, President of the Rio Olympic Games Organising Committee, was arrested and brought before the Supreme Court of Brazil on suspicion for corruption in the management of the Games funds.<sup>165</sup> Hickey, asked to provisionally stand down from being a member of the IOC until the indictment process was completed, whilst Nuzman followed the same path but by IOC decision.

Hickey was criticised but cleared of any criminal wrongdoing in an Irish government-commissioned report by Justice Cearbhall Moran, released on 14 August 14 in 2017. Proceedings against Hickey were due to take place in Rio, starting on 29 November 2017, but on 11 November, it was reported that Kevin Mallon, a co-defendant, had been granted an injunction by the Supreme Court in Brasilia to suspend the case against him. According to the Irish Times, *"the Supreme Court confirmed that the injunction extends to all of the accused in this process"*.<sup>166</sup>

All these events, in combination with the questions that had started to be raised worldwide concerning the immense expenses involved now in order to stage the Olympic Games, made many governments unwilling to take on such a project. Therefore, Thomas Bach, the new IOC President, immediately following his election, presented the "Agenda 2020", which focused mainly on limiting the expenses involved in a future staging. The latest decision of the IOC to award

<sup>164</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-37107450>

<sup>165</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-41510651>

<sup>166</sup> <https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1097337/pat-hickey-rio-2016-arrest-ioc-ticketing>

the Games, without the bid process, to Paris and Los Angeles for 2024 and 2028 respectively, certainly reflects this intention of the Olympic Movement, placing its course on a safer path.<sup>167</sup>

There was no political or ideological interference in the Games, besides the case of Feysa Lilesa, the Ethiopian Marathon runner, who raised his arms above his head and crossed his wrists at the finish line in the 2016 Rio Olympics in protest against the Ethiopian government's harsh treatment of the Oromo people. In this instance the IOC, although it ascertained that there was a violation of its regulations, simply reminded him of his obligations in accordance with the Charter! Was it slackness on behalf of the IOC not to punish the athlete, who was out of line? Or did its policy towards similar phenomena of athletes' promoting political views change? Did it consider the mistreatment of his people and not punish him? Or perhaps the clout that the IOC has now acquired enables it to display understanding when it finds itself faced with similar cases, such as the obvious violation of humanitarian values? Whichever of the foregoing is happening, this tolerance on behalf of the IOC runs counter to the stipulations of the Charter and history will show what tactic it shall follow in the future in similar phenomena.

Upon the government in Ethiopia changing, Lilesa's act, which had resulted in his exile for two years, was recognised and the athlete was honoured for his resistance.<sup>168</sup>

### **Tokyo 2020: In the midst of the pandemic**

The lights have not yet been turned down in the Tokyo Olympic Stadium for the 2020 Olympic Games, which were finally held in 2021, when the following paragraphs were written.

Tokyo managed to overcome domestic and international outcries against holding the Games, brought on by fear that they would fail tragically, due to the extensive spread of COVID-19 worldwide and the difficulties in protecting athletes and members of the NOC Delegations from the aggressive virus. However, this was a challenge faced not only by the Organising Committee, but by the IOC itself and personally by President Bach, who had personally committed to the staging of the Games and that the thousands of athletes and their entourage would be safe, in this unique meeting of peoples and civilizations, where the Games offer mankind

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167 <https://www.insidethegames.biz/articles/1051329/ioc-executive-board-approve-joint-awarding-plans-for-2024-and-2028-olympics>

168 <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-47879919>

one of the few opportunities for co-existence.

However, as the present study is not concerned with the general social impact of staging the Games, but is limited solely to the political influence exerted by them, we can say with certainty, in this regard, that the IOC managed to impose its rules and to show that the targets of the Movement can be achieved even under the most challenging conditions.

In February 2021, an event took place that rocked the Organising Committee and put the entire preparation of the Games at risk. TOCOG President, Yoshirō Mori, former Prime Minister of Japan, was obliged to resign because of sexist comments made against women. The process of replacing him with Seiko Hashimoto, former speed skater and track cyclist, was extremely rapid, and was greeted with satisfaction by the entire Olympic family.

In these difficult conditions the Olympic Movement had to prove that: a) despite the worst epidemiological conditions it was able to bring the world together and to offer a spectacle on a par with previous Games; b) it would not succumb to opportunist political expediences but will itself decide where and when to engage with political issues; c) it does not accede to blackmail concerning terms of ideological content, unwaveringly following its own course, not permitting any exploitation of the Games on any front; and d) it is in accordance with the precepts of the Charter and Agenda 2020, as regards protecting human rights, including gender equality.

The IOC dealt with these challenges of a political nature completely successfully:

a) It managed to bring together the delegations of the 205 NOCs that constitute its members. The fact that in the midst of a pandemic that had spread worldwide, the Tokyo Games brought together 11,090 athletes was truly a great achievement that can be attributed to the gravity, with which the IOC tackled the issue of COVID – 19. The lack of spectator presence affected the staging of the Games only minimally, and most certainly did not diminish the importance of the Games' motto, which was "United by Emotion".

b) The ban of Russia from the Games, in combination with accepting the participation of its athletes under the flag of the Russian Olympic Committee and the replacement of the national anthem with a piece of music by Tchaikovsky, proved that the Olympic Movement will not be dictated to by any political power. Additionally, there was much discussion about the IOC's refusal to attend the political memorial for the destruction of Hiroshima, in an effort not to be involved in events of a political nature. Instead, President Bach made a one-day visit to

Hiroshima. During his trip, Bach went to Hiroshima's peace memorial park and museum and met some survivors of the atomic bomb that devastated the western Japanese city on 6 August 1945. "I am here to pay respect to Hiroshima, the city of peace and to all the people of Hiroshima. I am here to reaffirm our peace mission in the Olympic Movement", Bach said in a speech... "We need more solidarity, more solidarity within societies, and more solidarity among societies".<sup>169</sup>

c) Following the discussions that dominated the stage for almost a year, about the change in the content of article 50 of the Charter, because of the recent rise of racial discrimination in the US, the decision of the IOC not to use the sporting field and the podium for demonstrations of a political or ideological nature, was respected, showing in a tangible manner the application of rules of the Movement.

d) Finally, the Games provided the IOC with the opportunity to prove the sensitivity of the Movement to issues related to protecting human rights and gender equality. After the attempt to forcibly pull sprinter Krystsina Tsimanouskaya from the Games and return her to Belarus by officials of the Delegation, for "*indecent behaviour*", which consisted of criticism against members of her country's Delegation, the IOC ensured her safe passage to Poland, in accordance with her wishes. At the same time, Delegation escorts Artur Shumak and Yuri Moisevich were asked to leave the Olympic Village and hand in their accreditation to TOCOG.<sup>170</sup>

In addition to this remarkable show of sensitivity on the part of the IOC during the Tokyo Games, the wish expressed in recent years on every occasion by President Bach on gender equality, was put into practice. "*Tokyo marks a 'turning point' for the elite international sporting competition as the most gender-equal Olympics in the Games' history, organizers said, with women accounting for nearly 49% of the 11,090 athletes. That's up from 45% at the last 2016 Rio Games, 23% at the 1984.* Even though many believed that the **XXXII** Olympics would be a great failure, in the end the Olympic Movement was too strong to succumb to the global pandemic.

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169 <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Tokyo-2020-Olympics/IOC-s-Bach-visits-Hiroshima-one-week-before-Olympic-opening>

170 <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/aug/06/ioc-strips-two-belarus-olympics-coaches-of-accreditation-over-krystsina-tsimanouskaya-scandal>



## **As an Epilogue**

The Olympic Movement has already spanned more than 120 years of existence, with disruptions large and small, with victories and defeats in the struggle for survival, with challenges and compromises with the political powers that surround it. It started out as an idea, was established as a Movement and has now asserted itself as a fact and nothing resembles any longer the conditions under which the idea was born. Nowadays, the Games have gradually become a complex event, much bigger and more complex than what they were in the '60s, the '70s, or even the '80s, becoming a domain of political confrontation.

By the end of the '80s, the IOC had steadfastly withstood a series of challenges on the political front, created by the end of World War II. The Cold War, which lasted for approximately 35 years, gave politics many opportunities to influence the evolution of the Movement from a position of power, perhaps mainly because the Olympic Games were a unique global platform to be heard. In subsequent years to the present day, other media with which to promote political positions have risen that are more effective to that end.

As the technological advances allow citizens to take any information in their home far more easily than a few years ago, the possibility of the Games being used in order to promote political expediences and messages is getting less interesting. As a result, these developments exhaust global information possibilities and no longer require the Games platform to promote political or ideological messages. In other words, it seems that today's huge technological globalisation has had a negative impact on the Games' exploitation by political expediences, in contrast to the influence of ideological and political expediences that prevailed at the time when participation in the Games started to grow.

Olympism is an ideology that has clear alignment with the values of some, rather

than all nations, making it an inherently political project. These values are defined principally by the Western philosophical origins of the modern Games and are aligned with broadly humanitarian aspirations, the rise of human rights and the values of international organisations. The IOC's relationship with the UN is one example of this, as we have indicated. Equally, the Olympics foster the universalising of these beliefs, by requiring their 206 member-countries to uphold the Olympic Charter which includes promoting non-discrimination and respect for human dignity (Miah & García, 2012).

The relationship between sports and politics has gone through many phases and many levels of conflict, as both these social activities have a different starting point and a different target. On the one hand, in spite of the fact that they represent a form of international competition, the Games are based on an open and strong co-existence of different peoples, religions, ideologies and cultures, aiming to secure brotherhood, solidarity, humanity and consolidation of world peace. On the other hand, politics has as its objective to prevail, to a smaller or greater extent, over anyone who is considered an adversary, attempting to exploit any fertile ground to pursue such action and to obtain an advantage that enables it to impose the idea that it expresses each time.

In the previous chapters it has become obvious that the nature of sports is such, that it is easily exploited both within the context of a State and outside of it. Therefore, it is not curious that politics sought to exploit the breadth and the sensitivities of the Olympic Movement to convey its own ideas, from Ancient Greece and up to its present-day expansion.

In the 120 years of its life, the relationship of the Olympic Movement with politics has gone through three major historic phases. The first starts with Coubertin's noble idea of reviving the Olympic Games and extends until shortly before World War II. It was an era when the Games had not yet become established as a global celebration of sports and culture and, therefore, they were not conducive for political exploitation in the ultra-conservative society of Europe at the start of the previous century. The Movement started out as primarily Eurocentric and remains so even to this day, not only because the greater part of IOC members come from the old Continent, compared to the other continents, but because its entire philosophy is rooted in European models. The first years, when neo-Olympism was nascent, Europe was politically fragmented, heading towards the so-called Great War (1914-1918). Although the political turmoil of that period, as well as that of the Interwar period that followed, affected the structure of sport within the States themselves,

according to the demands of the politicians that supported it, it did not affect the Games, that came out stronger from that first conflict. The Movement did not have to grapple with fixations and political practices, as many had not yet grasped its dynamic course. During this “innocent” period, sports tried to find its feet and make headway in an organised and methodical fashion, within the context stipulated by Coubertin and the other pioneers and developed mainly on an amateur basis, attached to the Principles and Values of Olympism.

The second phase of the sports and politics relationship was off to a dramatic start with the end of World War II, spanning the period up to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the parallel fall of communism. This was the most difficult period of the Olympic Movement and the IOC itself. The small number of NOCs that made it up increased exponentially with the emergence of new States from the Third World. The political rivalry between the two super-powers and their satellites became ever more intense. Olympic athletes were no longer selfless amateurs and started becoming valuable pawns on the political chess board. Due to their global span and the ease with which they enter the homes of every citizen in the world through television, the Games constitute the best platform to promote political expedencies. This was the period in which the resilience of Olympic Ideas, the cohesion of the members of the Movement, the dynamic that had been developed by its institutions and the persistence of its leaders in implementing the Values advocated by Olympism were put to the test. At the end of this phase, the IOC may have exited battered from the extreme political pressure to which it was subjected, but finally it stood its ground and in fact came out the stronger for it. Political interference in the Games throughout this period, the excessive promotion of political messages channelled gave the impression that the Movement was completely politicised. However, such an approach proved to be wrong, because from the moment that the bipolar adversity ceased *de facto* to exist, the Movement showed itself to be intact and steadfastly neutral in political developments. The risk of the nature of sports becoming altered was a thing of the past.

The third phase is the one we have been experiencing in the last 30 years, with political interference having all but disappeared from Olympic events and the IOC turning the tables and imposing its own terms in this relationship between sports and politics. Economic or ideological rivalries have been reduced dramatically and, however things may evolve, it is the politicians and governments that seek help from the Olympic Movement in their efforts towards bringing about the peaceful co-existence amongst peoples. There are no longer reasons to boycott the Games and

the causes for violating human rights have become significantly smaller.

The curve of the Games depicted in the beginning of the 2nd part clearly shows how the Olympic Movement being exploited by governments and ideologies has come a full circle. These events should remain in history as complex events, which now belong to scholars and researchers of the Movement's history. From the moment that technological development reached the point to offer all citizens the capacity to obtain information much more rapidly and from many sources, from their own home, the Games and alongside them all of sports, stopped constituting an attractive platform to convey political and ideological messages.

A few years ago, the Movement was endeavouring not to allow politics to intervene in the organisation of the Olympic Games, however, it has now taken a step further, putting a halt to political intervention even in the operation of its national representatives.

Now the Movement, in collaboration with the UN, having imposed its strength and its autonomy worldwide, is called upon to play a far more creative role, whose aim is world peace. IOC President, Bach, not only does not fear sports going hand-in-hand with politics, but, on the contrary, sets out the conditions under which such a course will be successful.

Of course, that does not mean that the Movement has ceased facing other problems.

The 2016 Rio Games may have confirmed, for yet another time, the now long-term absence of political interference in the manner in which they are carried out, however, new challenges have appeared, concerning the very nature of sport and its Principles. The wide-ranging use of forbidden substances; whether a hijab should be worn in the Games or not; the recent issue of gender definition and matters of ethical behaviour of some of the members of the IOC, have drawn attention and continue to occupy minds in the Movement and the responses to the questions being asked are by no means easy. However, the Movement is now called upon to resolve its own problems, without the presence and pressures of politics in its activities, supported by its autonomy and the dynamics it has gained over all these years, promoting the values of Olympism for a better tomorrow, not just for sports, but for the entire world.

Maybe it is time to enrich the well-known Olympic motto of *Citius – Altius – Fortius* with two additional words encouraging cleaner and more humane Games: *purus & humanius*.

Would this frame the five Olympic circles with two additional very significant

requirements that modern society has of the Olympic Movement?

Within this new international setting, the Movement continues to offer its services in the name of world peace. IOC President Bach gave an inspired speech in the Opening Ceremony of the 59th International Session for Young Participants on 2 June, 2019, on the Hill of Pnyx, in Athens, when he said: *"...in our fragile world today, we need this Olympic spirit more than ever before. ...Hardly a day goes by without news of rising nationalism, of mistrust and protectionism. In an age of global crises, we are seeing a worrying trend towards more isolation, more separation and less cooperation. Paradoxically, in our digital age, when there are more opportunities for communication than ever before, there is less dialogue and less engagement with people who hold different views. ...In a world drifting apart, the Olympic Games stand out as the only event that brings the whole world together in peaceful competition... From the beginning, the Olympic Games were always more than simply a sporting event. When Coubertin revived the Olympic Games, he saw them as a way to promote peace among nations and all people in the world. Always the visionary, he said: 'Should the institution of the Olympic Games prosper, it can become a potent factor in securing universal peace.' ...Throughout their existence, the Olympic Games have reflected this mission in different ways. ...If the Olympic Games bring together bitter rivals and enemies today, this shows that well over a century since their creation, the idea of promoting a peaceful world through sport continues to have much compelling power in our modern world"*.

August 2021

Dr Dionyssis Gangas



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# OLYMPIC MOVEMENT & INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

## **A confrontational coexistence over time**

The relationship between the Olympic Movement and politics has gone through many changes and levels of conflict, as both these social forces have a different starting point and different target. On the one hand, the Games are based on a warm and strong co-existence of different peoples, religions, ideologies and cultures, targeting brotherhood, solidarity, humanism and consolidating world peace. On the other hand, politics attempts to take advantage of any fertile ground to flex its muscles and to gain an advantage, able to assist in imposing any idea expressed each time.

Over the 120 years of its lifetime, the Olympic Movement's relationship with politics went through three major historical phases. The first started with Pierre de Coubertin's noble idea to revive the Olympic Games up until a short time prior to the 2nd World War. The second phase started dramatically before the end of the 2nd World War and spans the years until the fall of the Berlin Wall. Without a doubt this was the most difficult period for the Olympic Movement. The third phase is what we have lived through over the last 30 years, with political interventions in the Olympic Games gradually ebbing and the IOC reversing what had previously been the status quo, to impose its own terms in this relationship between sports and politics.

Today the Movement is autonomous and imposes its might internationally in the pursuit of world peace - in which it is called upon to play an increasingly creative role. This is a new era for the Olympic Movement, with an enhanced role on the international political chessboard, which requires the Movement to impose its autonomy.

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