

# The Olympic Ideal and the Winter Games Attitudes Towards the Olympic Winter Games in Olympic Discourses – from Coubertin to Samaranch

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## Introduction

In former times and to a certain extent still today Olympic Winter Games were and are criticized as incompatible with the olympic ideal and they still are considered to be less prestigious than the Olympic Summer Games.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this article is to analyze the evolution of the attitudes towards the Olympic Winter Games in the official Olympic discourse. I try to show how the interpretation of Olympism influenced and influences the attitude towards Olympic Winter Games and if it had some impact on the organization of these Games. Linking historical and philosophical aspects I try to position the Winter Games in the framework of the Olympic Movement and the olympic ideals, and I analyze how this position changed in time, from Coubertin to Samaranch.

Before talking about the history of the Winter Games and their relation to the Olympic Idea, some fundamental considerations about the Olympic Idea or the so-called Olympism are necessary.

## The Olympic Idea as a “Philosophy in process”<sup>3</sup>

In the course of the history of modern Olympism the Olympic Idea was construed in different ways. De Coubertin’s Olympism is not a well-defined and fixed philosophical theory. It is a syncretism drawing on ancient Greek philosophy, Christianity and democratic cosmopolitanism.<sup>4</sup> It must be interpreted in the context of its time. In France eclecticism was an important philosophical school of the 19th century. Victor Cousin, a former student of the German philosopher Hegel, was the leader of this school which tried to

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<sup>2</sup> Compared to the Olympic Summer Games, even scholars treat the Winter Games as step child or black sheep. Most of the research concerning the Winter Games deals with this topic from exclusively historical or economical perspectives.

<sup>3</sup> DaCosta calls it “process philosophy” (cf. DaCosta 1997, 10).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Boulongne, 1975.

combine different concepts and different philosophies, instead of confronting them. The Olympic Idea is a child of this eclecticism. It is a state of mind, “a pragmatist way of thinking that calls for immediate implementation.”<sup>5</sup>

Olympic values are susceptible to cultural and historical relativism.<sup>6</sup> They allow, indeed they call for a permanent redefinition. Coubertin himself explained:

“Olympism is by no means a system, it is a state of mind. It can be penetrated by the most varying ideas and neither one race nor one period of time may claim the exclusive monopoly of its definition.”<sup>7</sup>

It is certainly to this conceptual flexibility that Olympism owes its age-old and universal success. Olympism emerged as an entity of values admitting to multiple interpretations<sup>8</sup> and the Olympic Games as the symbolic crystallization of Olympism, as a sort of microcosm that reflects the diversity and universality of humanity.<sup>9</sup>

## Coubertin and the Early History of the Olympic Winter Games

### Origin of the Olympic Winter Games

One of the first international sports federations was the International Skating Union (ISU), founded in 1892.<sup>10</sup> No wonder that skating figured on the program elaborated during the founding session of the IOC in 1894, as a sport which should be part of the Olympic Games. In Athens for instance there was no possibility to practice this sport, but skating figured again on the first program draft for the 1900 Paris Olympic Games, even if it finally did not take place. The organizers considered that this sport should be excluded “as it was rarely practiced in Paris”.<sup>11</sup>

In 1908 at London, a section of winter sports was included in the program for the first time in the history of the Olympic Games. Skating, but also football,

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<sup>5</sup> Nissiotis, 1987, 129; Cf. Schantz, Müller 1986.

<sup>6</sup> Coubertin himself affirms that he would not hesitate to question his work in a hypothetical future life : “[...] I might even be seen to apply myself for the destruction of what I worked hard to achieve in my present life” (Coubertin, July 17, 1929, 1).

<sup>7</sup> Coubertin, November 22, 1918, 1.

<sup>8</sup> As an “Interpretationskonstrukt”, cf. Lenk, 1987; 1993.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. MacAloon 1984; Schantz 1996a, 1997.

<sup>10</sup> At the end of the 19th century ice skating was a rather popular winter sport in Europe. In different big European cities ice palaces were constructed which even allowed ice skating in the summer: The first world speed skating championships were held in 1889, the first European championships in 1891 and the first European championships in figure skating in 1892 (Cf. International Skating Union (n.d.), 6; Holum 1984; Kamper 1964, 13).

<sup>11</sup> French original version “étant d’une pratique rare à Paris” (Mérillon, 1901, 21).

and boxing were considered as winter sports at this time and held in October.<sup>12</sup>

At the IOC session of 1911 in Budapest, the proposition of Count Brunetta d'Usseaux,<sup>13</sup> an Italian IOC member, to include the Nordic Games of 1913 in the Games of the fifth Olympiad was rejected.<sup>14</sup> The Scandinavian countries, especially Sweden, were against Olympic Winter Games which would have damaged the prestige of their Nordic Games and the Holmenkollen competitions. Up until World War II, the Holmenkollen skiing events, organized every year near Oslo, were considered as the most important skiing competition.<sup>15</sup> The Nordic Games, founded in 1900, had been organized in Sweden every four years since 1901. They took place in 1901, 1905, 1909, 1913, 1917 and after a break of five years again in 1922, and 1926. They had been planned for 1930, but Olympic Winter Games were becoming more prestigious. This was the end of the Nordic Games.<sup>16</sup>

The Games of the sixth Olympiad were supposed to take place in Berlin. The first draft of the program for these games included skating<sup>17</sup> and skiing<sup>18</sup>. These events should have been organized as so called "Winter Olympics" in February 1916 on the Feldberg (Black Forest) in the south western part of Germany.<sup>19</sup> When Carl Hellberg, the Swedish member of the International Ski Commission<sup>20</sup> heard about this he showed a violent reaction against this proposal, while Norway and other countries were in favor.<sup>21</sup> But anyway, the plans of these Winter Olympics came to naught, when the First World War broke out.

During the congress of the National Olympic Committees held in Paris in June 1914 at the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the re-establishment of the Olympic Games, it was decided to group the Olympic sports into a category of compulsory sports and another group of optional sports. Ice hockey, skating and skiing belonged to the second category.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Today, the definition of winter sports is different: in the Olympic chart of 1996 only "those sports which are practiced on snow and ice are considered as winter sports" (IOC, 1996, 16, §10.4.)

<sup>13</sup> At the IOC session of 1911 in Budapest, Count Brunetta d'Usseaux asked whether the organizers of the Games of the fifth Olympiad in Stockholm had prepared a program for Winter Games. Balck, a Swedish IOC-member, answered that it was not possible because the Nordic Games would take place in 1913 (Procès-verbal de la 12ème session du Comité International Olympique. Budapest, 23-27 mai 1913, 5-6).

<sup>14</sup> Procès-verbal de la 12ème session du Comité International Olympique. Budapest, 23-27 mai 1913, 11.

When Ronald Renson argues that there were no skating in 1912 because there was no artificial ring available in Stockholm, he underestimates the sport political dimension of this issue (Renson 1996, 141).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Kamper, 1964, 24.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Ljunggren 1996.

<sup>17</sup> Figure skating, ice hockey.

<sup>18</sup> 50 km, 12 km, ski jump and Nordic combination which comprised jumping and 12 km cross-country skiing.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Deutsche Turnzeitung* 1914, 528, In Lennartz 1978, 98; cf. Lennartz 1980, 238.

<sup>20</sup> This commission was the predecessor of the International Ski Federation which was created in 1924. Cf. Krüger 1996, 107.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Krüger 1996, 107.

<sup>22</sup> CIO (novembre 1919). Congrès de Comités Olympiques Nationaux, tenu à Paris en Juin 1914.

In 1920 at the Antwerp Olympic Games, figure skating and for the first time ice-hockey were organized on the skating rink of the “Palais de Glace”.<sup>23</sup> At the 1914 Congress in Paris, even Norway, which had been trying to defend the exclusivity of her prestigious Holmenkollen skiing events, pleaded for the inclusion of skiing competitions in the program of the Olympic Games.<sup>24</sup>

During the IOC-session in 1921 at Lausanne, the French IOC members Count Clary et Marquis de Polignac expressed the wish of France to organize a winter sports week in 1924 and to get the recognition of the IOC for these events.<sup>25</sup> The minutes of the next day state that the winter sports could not be an integral part of the Olympic Games but that the Scandinavian countries should not have the monopoly of organizing these events. The IOC decided that France was entitled to organize a winter sports week in 1924 under the aegis of the IOC.<sup>26,27</sup> In 1926 at the IOC session in Lisbon, two years after this winter sports week had taken place in Chamonix, it was afterwards officially designated as the 1st Olympic Winter Games.<sup>28,29</sup>

## The Olympic Idea of Coubertin and the Winter Games

After having analyzed the Olympic ideas of Pierre de Coubertin Hans Lenk distinguished some main values which can be grouped into seven categories:<sup>30</sup>

1. personal perfectionism (swifter, higher, stronger),
2. harmony of body, mind, and arts,
3. social contact between different people (peace, mutual understanding, fair play),
4. religious bonds (religio athletae) combined with internationalism and democracy,

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<sup>23</sup> The “Palais de Glace” was constructed as roller skating rink in 1910 and later transformed into an artificial ice rink. Cf. Renson 1996, 143.

Ronald Renson argues that skating and ice hockey took place in Antwerp “because the Palais de Glace was there”, a kind of Olympic shelter in the severe after war period. But it is certainly just a superficial reason. The lobby of the winter sport countries composed by Austria, Switzerland, Canada and Germany pushed the IOC to include winter sports in its program (ibid.).

<sup>24</sup> CIO (novembre 1919). Congrès de Comités Olympiques Nationaux, tenu à Paris en Juin 1914.

<sup>25</sup> Procès-verbal de la session du CIO de 1921 à Lausanne, 8.

<sup>26</sup> Procès-verbal de la session du CIO de 1921 à Lausanne, 10.

<sup>27</sup> Concerning the first Winter Games in Chamonix see also Pallière 1991; Arnaud 1990; Arnaud, Terret 1993.

<sup>28</sup> Procès-verbal de la 24<sup>ème</sup> session du Comité Internatinal Olympique. Lisbonne, 3 au 7 mai 1926, 8, session of the 6 May.

<sup>29</sup> One year before the Lisbon session, at the technical meeting of the Olympic congress at Prague, the French IOC member de Polignac, on the behalf of the executive committee, had presented a chart for a separated cycle of Olympic Winter Games, which after some slight modifications had been accepted. (Cf. Comité International Olympique, (n.d.). Session de 1925. Lausanne, 13, 14.) Even Sigfrid Edström, IOC member from Sweden argued in favor of this project (Procès-verbal de la session du CIO de 1925 à Prague, 12).

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Lenk 1972, 320. The commentators of Pierre de Coubertin’s Olympic Idea are numerous, cf. Schantz 1996b. See also Segrave 1988; Mc Aloon, 1981; Boulongne 1994; Grupe 1997.

5. the independence of the Olympic Movement (amateurism, IOC as self-recruiting body),
6. harmonious synthesis of ancient and modern components,
7. the Olympic Games as a means of national education.

Most of these values are not specific to a special type of sport. During his whole life Coubertin tried to fortify sports in general as a means of education.

Many researchers believe that Coubertin was against winter sports, because it took such a long time to stage the first Olympic Winter Games.<sup>31</sup> But he did not regard winter sports as inferior to summer sports. He argued that it was not inherent to a certain type of sport to be beautiful and noble, but that the way a sport was played and the moral and spiritual attitude of the person who practiced this sport were important.<sup>32</sup> In his “Olympic Memoirs” he considers the winter sports as “so truly amateur, so frank and so pure in their sporting dignity that their complete exclusion from the Olympic program deprived it of much force and value”.<sup>33</sup> At the closing ceremony of the first Olympic Winter Games he expressed the wish that winter sports should figure definitively in the program of the Olympic Games.<sup>34</sup>

Even though since the very beginning of the modern Olympic Games skating has figured on the list of the Olympic sports, Coubertin had different reasons not to push through the organization of Winter Games. He would have liked the Olympic Games to be organized in the same time at the same city, just like the Greek tragedies, with their unity of time place and actors. According to Coubertin the Olympic Games should include “all kind of sports activities practiced in the modern world.”<sup>35</sup> However to unify Winter and Summer Games was not possible for evident reasons. In 1909 in the Olympic Revue he underlined the technical and organizational difficulties to include winter sports in the program of the Olympic Games and suggested that it would be better if these sports took place apart as Nordic Games.<sup>36</sup>

Another explication for Coubertin’s hesitation concerning Olympic Winter Games is his close friendship to the Swedish IOC member Gustav Victor Balck, who was the “soul of the Nordic Games”,<sup>37</sup> and the strongest opponent

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<sup>31</sup> E.g. Slowikowski, 1996, 133; Scheerer 1995, 100.

<sup>32</sup> “Ce qui est beau et noble, ce n’est point tel ou tel sport en soi, mais la façon dont il est pratiqué, l’esprit dont il est animé, l’âme qu’y met l’homme.” Coubertin August 1910, 115.

<sup>33</sup> Coubertin 1979 [1932], 107.

<sup>34</sup> Coubertin 1924, 721.

<sup>35</sup> “[...] tous les formes d’exercices en usage dans le monde actuel.” Coubertin, August 1910, 115.

<sup>36</sup> “L’industrie moderne a trouvé le moyen de créer de la glace artificielle mais il n’est guère raisonnable d’escompter le moment où une chimie perfectionnée pourra étendre sur le flanc des collines de la neige résistante et durable. Dès lors le patinage est le seul des trois grands sports d’hiver qui pourrait à la rigueur avoir une place dans l’enceinte olympique. La dépense serait énorme et les dimension de la patinoire nécessairement restreinte. Il vaut mieux s’en tenir à la solution qui consiste à grouper ailleurs en hiver sous le nom Jeux du Nord ces sports spéciaux” (Coubertin, December 1909, 186).

<sup>37</sup> Lyberg, 1996, 267.

to Olympic Winter Games during the presidency of Coubertin.<sup>38</sup> Balck argued that Olympic Games should only include summer sports in which all nationalities could participate.<sup>39,40</sup>

In the early times of the Olympic Movement the Winter Games were contested as lacking authenticity and originality. The compatibility with the classical Greek model was questioned. Would the Greek have had winter sports in the Olympic Games, if the climatic conditions had permitted it?<sup>41</sup> Coubertin, however, never intended to copy the Greek Games. He always underlined that the modern Olympic Games had to be adapted to the needs of modern times. Coubertin used the Greek model as an argument for a harmonious education of body, mind, and will. He also used it to win the favor of French intellectuals, who had a rather bad opinion of physical exercises but who in general were *grecophils*. Coubertin never hesitated to use history for pragmatical concerns.<sup>42</sup>

Even if there was no evident relation between modern Winter Games and ancient Greek culture, Coubertin established it in a book about the St. Moritz Olympic Winter Games. In the foreword to this book he wrote:

“Thanks to the Olympic Winter Games [...] the winter sports became an integral part of the Olympic Games. Since 1884 this possibility was taken into consideration and partly realized. And why not? The top of the Mount Olympus is covered with snow, isn't it? ...”<sup>43</sup>

## The Presidencies of Baillet-Latour and Edström

During the presidencies of Henry Baillet-Latour and Sigfrid Edström the “frank and pure”<sup>44</sup> winter sports were more and more frequently accused of not meeting the Olympic value of amateurism. In 1936 at Garmisch-Partenkirchen alpine skiing was introduced into the Olympic program. But the admission of this discipline provoked a serious conflict between the International Ski Federation (FIS) and the IOC. Athletes who worked as skiing instructors were regarded as amateurs by the Ski Federation, while in

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Balck to Coubertin, February 12, 1910; March 25, 1915; May 16, 1921.

<sup>39</sup> Balck to Coubertin, February 12, 1910.

<sup>40</sup> Only in 1909, when Norway was excluded from these Games for political reasons (Cf Lindroth 1996, 297, 289) Coubertin wondered if Winter Games should not be organized under the aegis of the IOC in order to replace the Nordic Games which had become an instrument of politics (Cf. Messerli quoted in Krüger 1997)

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Slowikowski 1996, 133.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Wirkus 1976.

<sup>43</sup> Coubertin 1928, 6. The original text is: “Was die olympischen Winterspiele von St. Moritz anbetrifft [...] so stellten sie die Wintersports [sic] resolut in den Rahmen der olympischen Spiele. Man hat seit 1894 an diese Möglichkeit gedacht und sie von 1908 ab auch teilweise verwirklicht. Warum auch nicht? Ist der Gipfel des Olymp nicht auch mit Schnee bedeckt? ...”

<sup>44</sup> Coubertin 1979 [1932], 107.

1935 in its session at Oslo the IOC came to the conclusion that these athletes could not be regarded as amateurs in the Olympic sense.<sup>45</sup> During the Games of Garmisch-Partenkirchen the International Ski Federation decided to boycott the next Winter Olympics unless the IOC changed its amateur definition. One year later at Warsaw the IOC had to vote whether Olympic Winter Games should be stopped or not. Sigfrid Edström who asked to make this fundamental decision considered the Winter Games as incompatible with the “Olympic spirit”.<sup>46</sup> Except for Edström, all the members voted for the continuity of the Olympic Winter Games. Just 9 month later, the question of the continuity of these games was asked again, after the International Ski Federation had taken the decision definitely not to take part in the 1940 Olympic Winter Games.<sup>47</sup>

The 1940 Olympic Winter Games, which first were planned to take place in Sapporo than in St. Moritz, and finally in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, became the victim of the second World War. The same sad destiny happened to the 1944 Games planned to be held at Cortina d’Ampezzo.

It was obvious that the Winter Olympic Games had problems to be accepted as an integral part of the Olympic program, their right to exist and their Olympic spirit was repeatedly called into question. No wonder that they were searching for identity. In 1952 the organizers of Oslo tried to invent a tradition<sup>48</sup> to give an identity to these games. Imitating the Olympic torch relay of the 1936 Summer Games, the organizers of the 1952 Oslo Winter Games organized a torch relay. The torch was lit at the fire place of Sondre Norheim’s<sup>49</sup> hut, the home of the pioneer of skiing, who lived in Morgedal, Norway. This ceremony was repeated for the 1960 Winter Games in Squaw Valley. In 1994, the flame from Morgedal, and the genuine one which has been lit in Olympia since the 1964 Innsbruck Games, were brought to Lillehammer. The initial plan to unify these flames, the Nordic tradition and the ancient Greek tradition, was dropped after heavy Greek protesting.<sup>50</sup> The symbolic relation between the ancient Greek Olympic Games and the Olympic Winter Games was established by the 1964 torch relay. Mixing invented tradition and ancient tradition would have been a further step into the postmodern era of Olympism after having changed the rhythm of the Winter Games.

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Lennartz 1995, 241.

<sup>46</sup> Procès-verbal de la 36ème session du Comité International Olympique. Varsovie, 7-12 juin 1937, session du 9 juin, 4

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Procès-verbal de la 37ème session du Comité International Olympique. Le Caire - 13, 15-18 mars 1938, réunion du 13 mars, 1.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Hobsbawm 1984.

<sup>49</sup> (\*1825-1897)

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Borgers 1996, 157-161; 176-179.

# The Greatest Danger for the Winter Games: Avery Brundage

After the Second World War, from 1952 to 1972, Avery Brundage put the emphasis on the financial and political independence of the Olympic Movement. When he took up the presidency, he went on a “crusade to do away with the Winter Games”.<sup>51</sup>

For 20 years he fought like a true Olympic Don Quixote against the windmills of sport commercialization and politicization.<sup>52</sup> Like this hero of the Spanish novel by Cervantes, Brundage was inspired by lofty and chivalrous but impractical ideals. He viewed amateurism and political abstinence as the fundamental Olympic values without which the Olympic Idea was doomed to fail.<sup>53</sup>

Brundage expressed no original philosophical ideas, but made constant references to Coubertin. His interpretation and his weighting of Coubertin’s ideas reveals to us indirectly his own intellectual approach to the olympic ideals.<sup>54</sup> He was strongly opposed to Olympic Winter Games. In his opinion “the creation of the Olympic Winter Games was a deplorable mistake which has done much to tarnish the Olympic image”.<sup>55</sup> In 1957 he wrote in a letter to Sigfrid Edström: “We should never have created the Winter Olympic Games, but how can we stop them now?”<sup>56</sup> Brundage advanced two main arguments to demonstrate the incompatibility of the olympic ideal and the Winter Games: They did not meet the fundamental Olympic values of universalism and amateurism.

## Universalism

Brundage was convinced that Coubertin was “strongly against” the Olympic Winter Games and that in his opinion “only sports which are universal should be on the Olympic program”.<sup>57</sup> But for him “snow and ice sports are far from universal.”<sup>58</sup> Especially alpine skiing which requires mountains, and which was not originally included in the Games “made them even less universal”.<sup>59</sup> And he continues: “[...] fewer than one third of the 130 National Olympic Committees have any interest whatsoever since they have no opportunity to

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<sup>51</sup> Guttman 1984, 197.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Guttman 1984; Schantz 1995.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Schantz 1995.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Schantz 1995, 83-91.

<sup>55</sup> Brundage 1971/1972, chapter XIV, 4.

<sup>56</sup> A. Brundage to S. Edström. Avery Brundage Collection, Box 43.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*



participate unless they travel to another country.”<sup>60,61</sup> Brundage was convinced that “even with the expansion in numbers of participants, the [Winter] Games remain a parochial event with few more than a score of nations seriously interested and by far most of the medals have been won and will continue to be won by competition from only a dozen countries”.<sup>62</sup>

Brundage criticizes also the fact that “the games have completely outgrown little mountain villages”<sup>63</sup> and “since nearly all the events cannot be held in any city they have to be scattered in the neighborhood and the intimate charm of a small winter resort is lost”.<sup>64</sup> He thought that scattering the Olympic sites in different places was a contradiction to “the Olympic Idea to bring the youth of the world to live peacefully together during the strenuous competitions”.<sup>65</sup>

## Amateurism

Brundage saw himself as the guardian of the grail of Coubertin’s olympic ideal, which had to be protected against commercialization and politicization. In a circular letter to all members of the IOC he wrote in January 1971:

“It has been said that Brundage is against winter sports. That this is not so is proven by the records of the last sixty years. He is not even against professional sport, which is a perfectly legitimate branch of the entertainment business. He is not against anything but he is for the Olympic Games and keeping them clean, pure and honest.”<sup>66</sup>

The amateur idea formed the crux of Brundage’s concept of Olympism; on it were based all the values and objectives of his olympic ideals. Remove amateurism and the olympic ideals as Brundage saw them, would collapse like a house of cards. Brundage believed that the sport as a whole was preserved by amateur sport only. For him “sports must be amateur or it is not sport”,<sup>67</sup> and in his “Olympic story” he explains: “amateur sport is the only kind of sport there is, because if it isn’t amateur, it isn’t sport – it is business”.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> When Frederik J. Ruegsegger Brundage’s, former long standing manager, was asked recently why Brundage did not want Winter Games, he answered: “According to the Olympic Charter the Olympic sport is universal but only 16 nations, struggling for medals, participated in the Winter Games. Do you call this universal?” (Engelbrecht 1996, appendix, p. 11. Quotation translated from German (O.S.))

<sup>62</sup> Brundage 1971/1972, chapter XIV, 6

<sup>63</sup> Brundage 1971/1972, chapter XIV, 5, 6.

<sup>64</sup> Brundage 1971/1972, chapter XIV, 6.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Brundage to all the Members of the I.O.C., Lausanne, January 18th, 1971, p. 2.

<sup>67</sup> Brundage (n.d.), 1.

<sup>68</sup> “M. Avery Brundage ....” 1949, 7.

After the Second World War winter sport was become big business, specially alpine skiing. This sport gradually evolved into a mass sport which, in view of the relatively expensive equipment required, held out a promise of enormous profits for the ski industry. When Brundage took the presidency he went on a “crusade to do away with the Winter Games”<sup>69</sup> in order to keep the “Olympic Movement pure, honest and undefiled, as designed by that distinguished French educator and sportsman, Baron de Coubertin”.<sup>70</sup> In 1960 at San Francisco he started his first severe attack against the Winter Games. Ditlev-Simonsen, IOC member from Norway, submitted a proposition in favor of the Winter Games because the international press had published articles about a project of the IOC to abolish the Winter Games after 1964.<sup>71</sup> After this proposition Brundage argued against these games stating “that several members are in favor of abolishing the Winter Games on the ground that they have the tendency to become more and more professional.”<sup>72</sup> In his argumentation he referred to the case of ice-hockey and its pseudo-amateurs. However, no decision concerning the abolition of the Winter Games was taken in San Francisco. The resolution was deferred to the session in Rome, were the majority of the IOC voted in favor of the Winter Games.<sup>73</sup>

A very spectacular attack against athletes considered to lack Olympic spirit was the exclusion of Karl Schranz from the 1972 Winter Games in Sapporo. The Schranz case highlighted the dilemma facing the IOC at that time: in order to preserve the credibility of amateurism as an basic Olympic value it was obliged to take harsh measures. However, strict application of the rules to all athletes would have jeopardized the very holding of the Games. The banning of Schranz was intended to set an example, but in reality it proved to be nothing but a last unsuccessful attempt to defend an olympic ideal which had long been irreconcilable with social realities. Ultimately there were only two logical solutions open to it: either to adapt the olympic ideal to the changed conditions of modern sport or abolish the Winter Games altogether.<sup>74</sup>

The other arguments which Brundage advanced against the Winter Games were not directly related to the Olympic Idea. They concerned the enormous costs, the hazardous winter weather conditions and “the intrusion into the wilderness and the damage to the environment”.<sup>75,76</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Guttman 1984, 197.

<sup>70</sup> Comité International Olympique (n. d.), 102.

<sup>71</sup> He stated also that according to press information, the IOC chancellor Otto Mayer had confirmed these rumors Cf. Minutes of the 56th session of the International Olympic Committee, San Francisco, February 15th to 16th 1960, p. 10; cf. *ibid.* annex no. 6.

<sup>72</sup> Minutes of the 56th session of the International Olympic Committee, San Francisco, February 15th to 16th 1960, 10.

<sup>73</sup> Procès-Verbal de la 57ème session du Comité International Olympique, 22 - 23 août 1960, Rome, 8-9; Cf. Mayer 1960, 319.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Schantz 1995, 161-164.

<sup>75</sup> Brundage 1971/1972, chapter XIV, 7.

At the end of his life he wrote in his memoirs: “The Olympic Winter Games have undoubtedly served a great humanitarian purpose in bringing to the attention of the world the healthful values of snow and ice sports but the commercialization that developed at Olympic levels should eliminate them from further Olympic consideration.”<sup>77</sup>

## The Pragmatic Turn: Killanin and Samaranch

Things were slowly going to change when Lord Killanin took the presidency. His successor Juan Antonio Samaranch accelerated these changes in a revolutionary way to adapt the Olympic Movement to the demands of its time. The rules of the Winter Games have been changed to meet the new demands of a (post-) modern sports world. Not idealistic belief in traditions and old ideas, but much more practical reasons guide the actions of the IOC today. Amateurism is no longer an argument against the compatibility of the Winter Games with the Olympic Idea. The rhythm, which had a highly symbolic value for Coubertin, was changed. The unity of place, another symbol in the eyes of Coubertin, is no longer important: The Olympic Charter stipulates that the Winter Games can be held in two bordering countries, if necessary.<sup>78</sup> Efforts to defend the lofty olympic ideals are being replaced by marketing strategies in order to sell Olympism and its symbols as a brand.

One problem concerning the Winter Games will be a challenge for the future: the compatibility of some winter sports with ecological respect for nature. As the IOC wants to sell its brand it has to follow the general trend of improving ecological awareness in our societies, which may not be without impact on the organization of the Winter Games. This has become evident since the Games of Lillehammer.

## General Evolution of the Winter Games

If we take a look at the general evolution of the Olympic Winter Games, we see

1. that they have not yet arrived at the golden era as have the Summer Games, so there seems to be a potential of development. While the evolution of the total broadcasting rights has been progressing rapidly for the Summer Games since 1972, there is a relative slow progression concerning the Winter Games (cf. Fig. 1) and

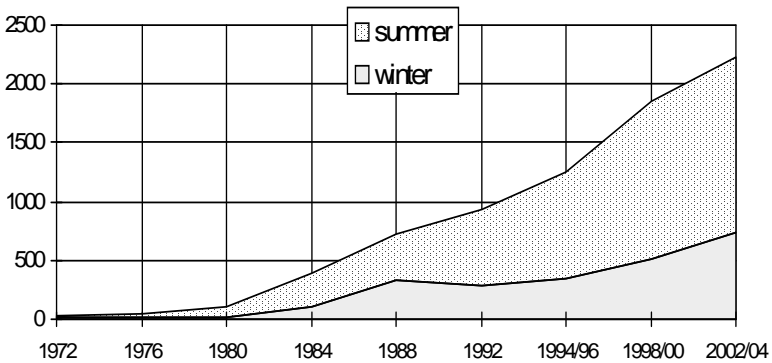
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<sup>76</sup> If he had known Coubertin's article concerning cross-country running and the protection of the environment, he certainly would have used it as an "Olympic" argument (Cf. Schantz 1996b)

<sup>77</sup> Brundage 1971/1972, chapter XIV, 14.

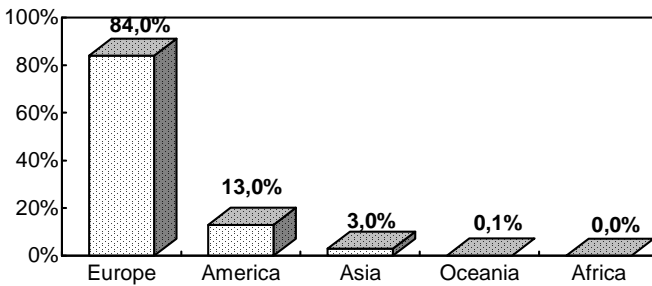
<sup>78</sup> IOC 1996, 51 (§ 38.2).

- that they are still in contradiction to the universality of the Olympic Idea.

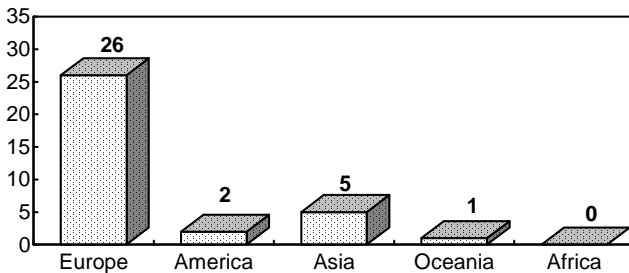


Sources: Chappelet (1991, 152); Landry, Yerlès (1997, 170); (CIO 2001, 3).

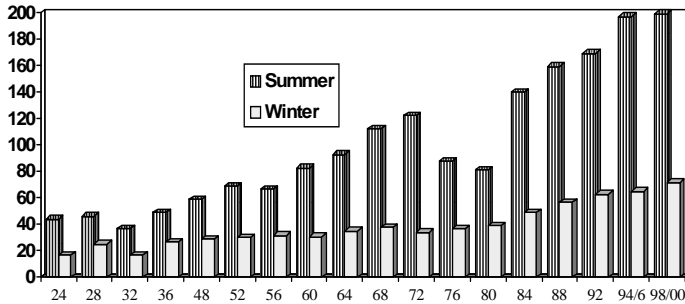
**Fig. 1 Evolution of the total broadcasting rights paid in million \$ US**



**Fig. 2 Medals by continent (1924-94)**



**Fig. 3** Number of medal winning NOCs by continent (1924-94)



Sources: Scherer (1995); Official Reports from Atlanta and Nagano.

**Fig. 4** Number of participating NOCs in the Olympic Summer and Winter Games

Figures 2, 3 and 4 show clearly that success in the Winter Games is limited to industrialized nations of the northern hemisphere, especially Europe and North America. Africa is totally, Oceania almost excluded.<sup>79</sup> Sometimes “exotic participants” show up, and are more or less ridiculed.

Universalism is actually one of the most important values of the Olympic Idea, in a postmodern world which is shrinking very fast, and which is threatened by the clash of cultures.<sup>80</sup> Summer as Winter Games should be a worldwide festival of all cultures in order to be a symbol of peaceful competition promoting mutual understanding. Therefore no nation should be excluded from the participation of the games.

In a short second part I will try to predict or rather make some propositions for the future for postmodern Winter Olympic Games which could meet the modern values of Olympism.

## The Future of the Winter Games

I would not appreciate to be considered as a fortune teller, because I think history is made by so many contingencies that it is impossible to predict the future based on the past. The other argument is that science is not able to predict its own findings, as the philosopher Karl Popper showed clearly in his critique of historicism.<sup>81</sup> But it is necessary to think about the future, to speculate about the future, in order to prepare the future or to be prepared for

<sup>79</sup> For the history of the participation of Latin America see Krämer-Mandau 1996.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Huntington 1996.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Popper 1957.

it. For these speculations we naturally will use all of our knowledge, the unique base which we can found such speculations on. One type of this knowledge is the historical knowledge.

Considering the history of the Olympic Games and the recent global changes in our world, in and outside of the sports movement I think there are the following points that argue in favor of a considerable change in the organization of the Winter Olympic Games of the future.

- In the era of globalization differentiation between winter and summer sports is going to be anachronistic.
- The trend to standardize competitions and the growing ecological awareness favors indoor sports.
- The number of events and of participating nations will increase for economical reasons and should improve for philosophical reasons.

Our world is becoming smaller and smaller, Mc Luhan's (1969) reference to the world as a global village is going to be real. From a global perspective seasons like summer or winter have a completely different sense. Summer and winter are becoming less and less temporal but more and more geographical notions. Sports are depending less and less on weather or seasons. Of course, a lot of sports need certain special conditions, geographical conditions like mountains for skiing (snow can be made artificially) or big water surfaces for sailing, but many sports are completely independent of seasons, especially the indoor sports or ball-games like basketball, handball, badminton or table-tennis. To differentiate between winter and summer sport is becoming anachronistic. Even in the very beginnings of the Olympics – as I mentioned earlier – typical winter sport events like figure skating were held during the Summer Games, while soccer and boxing were considered winter sports.

There is a strong trend to practice outdoor sports which are largely dependent on weather conditions and even more so on certain geographical conditions, but at the same time there is a trend to formalize and normalize those sports, in order to practice them as fair competitions under standardized indoor conditions. Beside the purpose of standardization another reason for practicing these sports indoors is the problem of ecological compatibility of many outdoor sports. Alpine skiing needs huge outdoor facilities, while indoor sports can be practiced in multi-functional halls (which afterwards can be used for multifarious purposes) in cities.<sup>82</sup>

When in 1986 the IOC decided to organize the Winter Games in between the four year cycle of the Summer Games, one of its (official) reason was to facilitate the organization of the Winter Games, another reason, probably the

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<sup>82</sup> There is a trend to hold the Winter Games in big cities, Lillehammer was an exception.

most important one, was the economical aspect. This was also the first step to establish an equilibrium between Winter and Summer Games. The Olympic Summer Games have reached the golden age. But this means the perspectives for better times are reduced. The rapid evolution of the number of participants, the number of sports, the financial benefit, the records, the spectators will not continue at the same pace. Economical and ecological considerations will bring the gigantism of the Summer Games to a halt, but the Winter Games still have an important potential of growth.

It would be against the laws of business if such potentials were not used. The Olympic Idea will not be an obstacle; it is flexible and can be adapted to the needs of modern times. Amateurism is no longer an Olympic value, ancient traditions are adapted to modern needs, i.e. selling the Olympic brand. Why should we keep the differentiation between winter and summer sports? Different attempts were made (1965-1977, 1970, 1972, 1975, 1980) to transfer indoor summer sports like boxing, fencing or basketball to the Winter Games. As you can imagine no federation accepted the transfer of its sport from the Summer Games to the Winter Games which still are considered to be less prestigious.<sup>83</sup> However, if the International Federations have to choose between figuring in the program of the Winter Games or perhaps not taking part at all in the Olympic program, they certainly will accept the first solution. Of course this could be considered as blackmailing, but if the Winter Games are becoming more prestigious it will be easier to convince certain federations to participate in these Games. Why not organize beach volleyball in the Summer Games and indoor volleyball in the Winter Games? Why not accept "brain sports" like chess and bridge as winter sports?<sup>84</sup> Why not accept sports like African wrestling or cross-country running in the Winter program in order to meet one of the most important Olympic values – universalism? New sports,<sup>85</sup> traditional Olympic indoor sports (boxing, badminton, table-tennis etc.), more sports for women and more sports for people with disabilities could contribute to render the Winter Games less Euro- and American-centered and more universal, which means more Olympic.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Cf. Gueorguiev 1995, 15-16.

<sup>84</sup> Marc Hodler, IOC member since 1963 and president of the International Winter Sports Federations, made this proposition in a conversation I had with him on 30th of November 1997 at Lausanne.

<sup>85</sup> For the problem of including new sports cf. Morgan 1996.

<sup>86</sup> According to Coubertin "all the olympic is universal" ("Ce qui est Olympique est universel." Coubertin, August 1910, 118).

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