

THE OLYMPIC GAMES BETWEEN POLITICS AND SPORTS

Sebastian Delast-Voinea-Popovici*

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Abstract

All sports competitions were held at Olympia, a religious, cultural and sports centre of ancient Greece, located in the city of Elis. For the ancient Greeks, the Olympiad was the interval of 1457 days, 10 hours and 40 minutes between two editions of the Olympic Games, denoting, in current speech, the respective event, i.e. its festive event. There are 293 recorded Olympiads held in ancient Greece. They took place regularly for almost 1,200 years, because in 393 AD to be banned by the Byzantine emperor Theodosius I, who, converted to Christianity, considered the manifestations dedicated to Zeus to be pagan. All the buildings of Olympia were burned and ruined by order of Theodosius II in AD 426. To these were added robberies and natural calamities, and the city was then forgotten for 1,500 years. The Olympics played an important role in the social and economic life of the ancient Greeks, being a manifestation of national solidarity, meant to awaken the consciousness of the ethnic community of all Hellenes. It was 1,503 years before Baron Pierre de Coubertin succeeded in relaunching the Olympic Games. The French presented this idea as early as 1892, but the rebirth of the Olympics was consecrated to him only two years later, on June 16, 1894, during an international congress held in Paris. On June 23, 1894, the International Olympic Committee was founded by Baron Pierre de Fredi, Baron de Coubertin (France). The presidents of the C.I.O., from its establishment until the period of the Second World War, were: Demetrius Vikelas (1894-1896, Greece), Pierre de Coubertin (1896-1925), Count Henri de Baillet-Latour (1925-1942, Belgium). Unfortunately, during the 20th century, the Olympic Games had quite a lot to do with politics, with propaganda in the turbulent 20th century, the symbols of the great competition being tarnished throughout this century.

Keywords: *Olympics; politics; sport; performance; Greece*

The origins of Olympism

According to the unanimous opinion of historians, the year 776 BC.¹ represents the beginning of the ancient Olympic Games. Legends

* Ph.D. Candidate, George Emil Palade University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Sciences and Technology of Târgu Mureş, popovici.sebastian@yahoo.com

¹ "Din istoria jocurilor olimpice", in *Foaia românească*, Giula-Ungaria, nr. 33/13.08.2004, pp. 10-11. See: G. de Hanover's article from *Lettre d'informations*, nr. 17/1969, Paris.

say, however, that the races dedicated to Zeus date back much longer, even from the 10th or 9th centuries BC. Pindar, the great Greek lyric poet, who dedicated 14 triumphal odes to athletes who distinguished themselves at various Olympiads, claimed that they were initiated by Hercules himself. According to historical sources, the first Olympic champion was Coroebus², a cook from a town neighbouring Elis, who won a running race over a distance of 600 feet. The games lasted 5 days. After the usual religious sacrifices, followed the athletic contests with the participation of hoplites (Greek pedestrians), wrestling, boxing, pancration (a combination of these two sports), chariot races, horse riding and pentathlon (competition composed of 5 events: jump, discus, lance, running and fighting). The winners received a crown of laurels, were carried in triumph, celebrated with songs and feasts. They had the right to hire a poet to compose a triumphal ode for them³. Although there is still the impression that the winners were rewarded only with symbolic prizes, this fact is only partially true. The olive branch, introduced as a prize at the advice of the Oracle of Delphi, was often accompanied by gifts from fellow citizens and even cash prizes. Then, the winner enjoyed the respect of everyone and was welcomed home as a true hero⁴. Only male Greeks, free citizens, participated in the Olympic games. Women and slaves had no access, not even having the right to watch the competitions.

Olympia – religious, cultural and sports centre of ancient Greece

All sports competitions were held at Olympia, a religious, cultural and sports centre of ancient Greece, located in the city of Elis⁵. For the ancient Greeks, the Olympiad was the interval of 1457 days, 10 hours and 40 minutes between two editions of the Olympic Games, denoting, in current speech, the respective event, i.e. its

² Historical sources speak of the existence of a single race at the first edition of the ancient Olympic Games, called the “stadium”, that is, a running event over a distance of about 200 meters, the length of the stadium. The winner was the one who passed the last milestone first, the time achieved having no relevance. Coroebus or Koroibos, a cook, is said to be the first to win the race in the first edition of the Games. (See also the article by Gabriel Peneş, “Primul campion din lume a fost un bucătar”, in *Libertatea*, ediția on-line, 09.08.2008, source: <https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/primul-campion-din-lume-a-fost-un-bucatar-269311>, accessed on the date of 30.11.2023.

³ Ștefan Popa, “Un scurt istoric în superlative”, in *Lumea*, nr. 41/08.10.1964, p. 15.

⁴ “Primele olimpiade modern”, in *Steaua roșie*, nr. 128/15.09.1964, Târgu Mureș, p. 2.

⁵ Comitetul Olimpic și Sportiv Român, *Ghid olimpic*, București, Monitorul Oficial, 2013, p. 19.

festive event⁶. There are 293 recorded Olympiads held in ancient Greece. They took place regularly for almost 1,200 years, because in 393 A.D. to be banned by the Byzantine emperor Theodosius I, who, converted to Christianity, considered the manifestations dedicated to Zeus to be pagan. All the buildings of Olympia were burned and ruined by order of Theodosius II in AD 426. To these were added robberies and natural calamities, and the city was then forgotten for 1,500 years⁷. The Olympics played an important role in the social and economic life of the ancient Greeks, being a manifestation of national solidarity, meant to awaken the consciousness of the ethnic community of all Hellenes.

During the centuries when the Olympic Games ceased to be held, their memory was preserved in the consciousness of the people. During the Renaissance, the great scholars evoked in their writings the glorious image of the Olympic Games. They reappeared dispersed during the 17th-19th centuries, in a small number, at the local level. It was only at the end of the 19th century that an attempt was made to resume the Olympic games in a modern form.

The Olympic flame

Fire has been a sacred symbol since ancient times. In Hellas, fire symbolized light and the rebirth of the world. According to legend, fire was stolen for humans by Prometheus from Zeus. The history of the Olympic Flame began in ancient Greece 2,700 years ago. At each Olympic Games, a flame was lit that burned throughout the duration of the Games. The symbolism of the Olympic flame was the death and rebirth of the Greek heroes.

Today, the Olympic Flame represents the continuity between the ancient era and the modern era, becoming a symbol of the modern Olympic Games at the initiative of Pierre de Fredi Coubertin⁸.

⁶ See: Gheorghe Mitra, Alexandru Retinschi, *Constelația Olimpiadelor*, București, Editura Sport-Turism, 1984, p. 318.

⁷ Comitetul Olimpic și Sportiv Român, *Ghid olimpic*, București, Monitorul Oficial, 2013, p. 31.

⁸ *Pierre de Fredi Coubertin* (1863-1937) is considered father of J.O. modern. For 21 years, since he was only 24 years old, he campaigned for the revival of J.O., making it his life's goal. He made his intention public in 1892 at the anniversary of the "Union of the French Society of Athletic Sports", showing that J.O. it would mean a new and strong support given to peace. But only at the next congress of this union, Coubertin obtained the discussion of his proposal, on 23.06.1894, at the Sorbonne University. The works were attended by representatives of 49 sports societies from Europe and America, who adopted the idea of celebrating every 4 years J.O. He was the president of the C.I.O. between the years 1896-1925 and a member of the CIO for 43 years. In 1936, Romania granted it *Ordinul Meritul Cultural pentru Sport*, cavalier, class I. (See: Gheorghe Mitra, Alexandru Retinschi, *op.cit.*, p. 90).

The tradition of the Olympic flame returned during the 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam, when an employee of the local Electricity Authority lit a symbolic flame at the top of the Marathon Tower at the Olympic Stadium. Gesture seen as a symbol of purity and aspiration towards perfection. The Olympic flame, as we know it today, was used for the first time in Berlin in 1936, at the suggestion of Dr. Theodor Lewald (Chairman of the Organizing Committee) and Professor Carl Diem, at the C.I.O. Session. from Athens 1934⁹. Several months before the start of the Olympic Games, the Olympic Flame is lit, on the site of the old ancient Olympic Games, in Olympia, on a torch with a parabolic mirror in which the rays of the Sun are reflected. The flame is then carried from country to country, continent to continent, to the venue of the next games. The torch is carried by athletes, celebrities, ordinary people, on foot or on horses, camels, or it is carried by plane or underwater. On the day of the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games, the Olympic Flame arrives at the main stadium, and with it the fire is lit in a larger container, marking the official start of the Olympic Games. The Olympic flame is left burning throughout the games until the closing ceremony when it is extinguished, marking the end of the Olympics¹⁰.

The revival of the Olympic Games

The ruins of Olympia were hidden underground for 15 centuries, until the revival of the Olympic Games was prompted by archaeological research undertaken on the territory of ancient Hellas. In 1723 and then in 1767, proposals were made to carry out excavations on the banks of the Alpheios river, but they were not given a favourable course. Only in the years 1805 and 1807, some English archaeologists, following some brief excavations, brought to light the first vestiges of the sanctuary in Olympia and were able to draw up a plan of the Temple of Zeus. More thorough research was carried out in 1829, when numerous vestiges were found in a short space of time. The idea was taken up by the team of the German archaeologist Ernst Curtius¹¹, who, after six years of work (1875-1881), managed to bring to light numerous objects such as: statues, vessels, plates with various inscriptions, etc. The success of Ernst Curtius led Pierre de Fredi Coubertin to ask himself the question: "Germany has found

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 132.

¹⁰ Raluca Ungureanu, "Flacăra olimpică și traseul ei prin istorie", in *Agenția de Presă RADOR*, București, 08.05.2023, sursa: <https://www.rador.ro/2023/05/08/flacara-olimpica-si-traseul-ei-prin-istorie/>, accessed on the date of 03.12.2023.

¹¹ Ernst Curtius was a German philologist, historian and archaeologist (1814-1896). See: Gheorghe Mitra, Alexandru Retinschi, *op.cit.*, p. 94.

what materially remains of Olympia, why should not France revive its spirit and splendours?"¹²

Several attempts were made for their discovery, but it succeeded only in 1875-1831 to the German Ernest Curtius. He gave a lecture on the ancient city of Olympia in January 1852. The interest shown in the presented theme led to the beginning of the first archaeological excavations in that Greek city. Excavations began in the fall of 1871 when Ernst Curtius, together with a large team of archaeologists, managed to find the statue of Hermes, the creation of Praxiteles, and many other sculptures of great artistic value. Constructions and marble slabs with the names of the victors have also been discovered.¹³

Once the ruins of Olympia were unearthed, the idea of reviving the Olympic games was born.

Evanghelie Zappa (1800-1865), a Greek merchant born in the town of Labova in Northern Epirus (today in Albania), settled in 1833 in Romania, in Broșteni, a town located 60 km from Bucharest, was concerned with the revival of the Olympic Games, in his country of origin, Greece¹⁴. In 1858, Zappa proposed to King Otto of Greece (the first king of modern Greece) the restoration of the Olympic Games, "to be celebrated every four years, according to the teachings of the ancient Greeks, our ancestors". Zappa wanted to impose the spirit of the ancient Olympic Games on the modern age. These were organized and limited to Greek participation only, following the model of those of Antiquity. Thus, the Olympic Games were reborn on Greek soil in 1859, in Athens. The Greek government requested that they take place simultaneously with the industrial and agricultural exhibitions. Evanghelie Zappa¹⁵ designed and financed the construction of an exhibition complex in Athens, called the "Establishment of the Olympics"¹⁶. Thus, in the years 1875, 1888 and 1889, various competitions were organized, but they were not so important as to arouse the interest of public opinion.

¹² Maria Bucur-Ionescu et alii, *România la Jocurile Olimpice*, Editura Sport-Turism, București, 1985, p. 17.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

¹⁴ Valentin Costandache, Lucreția Miclescu, *Enciclopedia educației fizice și sportului din România*, Târgu-Jiu, Măiastra, 2015, p. 476.

¹⁵ Among the forerunners of the Renaissance of modern Olympism, one of the most important figures is that of Evanghelie Zappa. Among other things, one of the important monuments of Athens - the Zapeion - is linked to his name. (see : Florin Orban, "Evanghelie Zappa, precursor al renașterii olimpice", *Radio România Internațional*, 29.10.2014, source : https://www.rri.ro/ro_ro/evanghelie_zappa_precursor_al_renasterii_olimpice-24348 accessed on the date of 02.12.2023).

¹⁶ Comitetul Olimpic și Sportiv Român, *Ghid olimpic*, București, Monitorul Oficial, 2013, p. 35.

The fact that Zappa¹⁷ spent part of his life in Romania, where he became, at his request, a Romanian citizen, also gave rise to exaggerations, as can be seen from the title of an article published in "Gazeta Sporturilor" on January 10, 1936, namely: "The modern Olympics were initiated by a Romanian!"¹⁸. The newspaper actually repeated an information from the official magazine of the O.T.T. (the supreme forum of Hungarian sports) and also showed that Pierre de Fredi Coubertin was the founder of the Games started in 1896, which "were not the first modern ones, but the first international ones", a statement that contains a grain of truth. In this article it was also shown that: "from the list of winners from the first Olympiad (from 1859) we quote Dimitrie Atanasiu, winner in the running, and Constantin Cristu, winner in the throws. According to their names, we think they were both Romanians". The latter statement could not be confirmed later. Although his proposals, born on the territory of Romania, failed, Evangelie Zappa must be considered one of the forerunners of the revival of the modern Olympic Games.

As I mentioned before, the idea of reviving the Olympics was materialized by the Frenchman Pierre de Fredi Coubertin. In 1894, Coubertin convened an international conference on sports in Paris. At this meeting, the organization of the Olympic Games was decided, the International Olympic Committee was elected and Athens, the capital of the country, was established as the venue for the first Olympics as a sign of gratitude for the role of representing the cradle of the Olympics. Since then, the Olympic games have been held regularly, every 4 years, except during the two world wars.¹⁹

It was 1,503 years before Baron Pierre de Coubertin succeeded in relaunching the Olympic Games. The French presented this idea as early as 1892, but the rebirth of the Olympics was consecrated to him only two years later, on June 16, 1894, during an international congress held in Paris²⁰. On June 23, 1894, the International Olympic Committee was founded by Baron Pierre de Fredi, Baron de Coubertin (France). The presidents of the C.I.O., from its establishment until the period of the Second World War, were: Demetrius Vikelas²¹ (1894-1896, Greece), Pierre de Coubertin (1896-1925), Count Henri de

¹⁷ Zappa supported the foundation of the Romanian Academy and the writing of a Romanian grammar through donations. (See: Victor Bănciulescu, "Anul olimpic 1968", in *Flacăra*, nr. 1/01.01.1968, București, pp. 20-21).

¹⁸ "Olimpiadele moderne au fost inițiate de un român!", in *Gazeta sportului*, nr. 1925/10.01.1936, p. 1.

¹⁹ "Primele olimpiade moderne", in *Steaua roșie*, nr. 128/15.09.1964, Târgu Mureș, p. 2.

²⁰ "Din istoria jocurilor olimpice", in *Foaia românească*, Giula-Ungaria, nr. 33/13.08.2004, pp. 10-11.

²¹ *Demetrius Vikelas* – Greek poet and historian, was the first president of the C.I.O.

Baillet-Latour (1925-1942, Belgium)²². It is interesting that the members of the International Olympic Committee were mostly English princes, French duchesses or American billionaires: they were not interested in money, because from a financial point of view they were accomplished.

Regarding the first Olympics, the Romanian newspaper *Rampa* from 1923 stated the following:

“The first Olympics was given to Greece and it took place with great success in 1896 in Athens. The second modern Olympics took place in 1900 in Paris in connection with the universal exhibition held there. The third Olympiad took place in St. Louis in America (1904). The fourth, after an interval of two years in Athena. The fifth Olympiad (1909) in London was impressive, but it was overshadowed by the sixth Olympiad (1912) in Stockholm. In the latter, as a peacemaker of the nations. Leaving all passion and hatred aside, the representatives of all nations will fight with their last energy to bring home the Olympic trophy.”²³

The Olympic Games and politics

On June 23, 1894, the congress decided to reorganize the Olympic games and create the governing body of the Olympic movement, the International Olympic Committee (I.O.C.). representatives of 11 countries entered, including Russia. It is significant that the representatives of Germany, a country that was preparing for a new war, refused to take part in the congress.

Unfortunately, the Olympic Games had quite a tangent with politics, with propaganda in the turbulent 20th century, the symbols of the great competition being tarnished throughout this century. The first proof of the lack of fair play, the first black marks on the five rings - the symbol of Olympism - appeared in 1936, when, in Berlin, the modern Olympic Games went down in history under the name “Nazi Olympics”. Then followed Helsinki 1952 with the first Olympics of the “Cold War”, Melbourne 1956 - the “Olympics of Boycotts”; Munich 1972 - “Bloody Olympics”, with the attack of the terrorist organization “Black September”, resulting in the death of 11 Israeli athletes, of which 3 were born in Romania. The boycott continued in Montreal in 1976 - the “boycott against New Zealand”; Even Moscow was not “managed” when in 1980 it was organized into the U.S.S.R. “Red Olympics”. After 4 years, in 1984, the Olympiad was hosted by the other pole of power of the Cold War, in the USA, where the “Soviet

²² Maria Bucur-Ionescu et alii, *op.cit.*, p. 23.

²³ “Despre Olimpiade”, in *Rampa*, nr. 1833/1923, București, p. 8.

revenge” took place in Los Angeles, materialized by the non-participation, the U.S.S.R. and some satellite states that boycotted, thus the competition²⁴. The 1988 Seoul Olympics went down in history as “the last Olympics of the Cold War”, followed by the 1992 Barcelona Olympics – “the first Olympics after the fall of the Iron Curtain”. Until the Second World War, 400m athletes, fencers or steeplechase riders were happy to win a medal, glory was their ideal. During the 20th century we can see that politics and mercantilism changed the paradigm of Olympic sports.

The athletes of tsarist Russia, not receiving any support from their government, could not take part in the first three editions of the Olympic games in 1896, 1900 and 1904. Only at the London Olympics in 1908 was Russia represented by a small delegation. But with all the small number of representatives - only five people - the Russian athletes achieved good results. Russian fighters Nikolai Orlov (light cat.) and Aleksandr Petrov (heavy cat.) were rewarded with silver medals. This was the Olympic debut of athletes from Russia. At the 1912 Olympic Games, Russia sent a large delegation to Stockholm - 169 people. The Russian athletes took part in all the competitions included in the program but did not get any gold medals. The wrestler M. Klein (middle category) and the shooting team took second place. In the sailing races and in the target shooting event, the Russian athletes took third place. According to the number of medals won, the Russian team shared 15-16 places with the Austrian team. The Great War interrupted international sports ties. The next Olympiad took place in 1920 in Antwerp. It was at a time when the major Western powers sought to isolate the Soviet Union. The organizers of the Olympics and the International Olympic Committee did not send invitations to the athletes of Soviet Russia, although the Russian Olympic Committee had been recognized by the I.O.C. In those years and later, members of the International Committee sought to use the sports movement in the fight against left-wing extremism. The “half measures” policy of some C.I.O. leaders. it was seen especially in 1936, during the Berlin Olympics.

In London, in 1908, for the first time in the history of the new Olympic Games, a political incident took place, meeting at that time the relations between England and the USA were not the best, the British officials “forgot” to raise the American flag during the opening ceremony, which caused the protest of the U.S. delegation²⁵.

The designation of Berlin as the host of the 1936 Olympic games triggered, for the first time in the history of Olympism, political

²⁴ “Jocurile olimpice și...politica”, in *Cuvântul liber*, nr. 186/20.09.2000, Târgu Mureș, p. 7.

²⁵ “Din istoricul Jocurilor Olimpice”, in *Zori noi*, nr. 5226/30.09.1964, Iași, p. 3.

protests. There was the question of moving that Olympics to another country, the favourite being Greece. The president of the American Olympic Committee, Avery Brundage²⁶, declared in 1933:

“The very foundation of the modern revival of the Olympic Games will be undermined if certain countries are allowed to limit the participation of athletes on racial, class or religious grounds”²⁷.

To appease the spirits, Hitler invited an inspection commission to Germany, which included Avery Brundage. Upon his return to the United States, Brundage had completely changed his mind, declaring that Jewish athletes were being treated well, and the Olympics were to be held in Berlin as planned. However, in many countries the question of boycotting the Berlin Olympics was raised, and the most heated debate took place in the United States, which brought the largest Olympic lot. Judge Mahoney’s campaign to have Americans boycott the Olympics, however, ran into staunch opposition from the president of the US Olympic Committee. Avery Brundage proved to be the most vehement supporter of the United States’ participation in the Berlin Games, arguing that “sports should not be mixed with politics.”²⁸

World public opinion thus demanded to take away the right of Hitler's Germany to organize the Olympics, a symbol of peace and fraternity between peoples. For this purpose, a conference was held in Paris in defence of the Olympic ideals, at which it was decided to organize, simultaneously with the Berlin Olympics, a popular Olympics in Barcelona. But, due to the outbreak of civil war in Spain and the opposition of the International Olympic Committee, this plan fell through.

In 1936, Hitler used the Olympics to show the world the strength of the new Nazi Germany. It was a great show, perfectly organized. The Jews were forcibly removed from the city, and at the request of the organizers, the Nazis erased all anti-Semitic slogans from the walls of the buildings. Even the trail of the Olympic flame appeared in 1936 as a “brilliant publicity stunt” by Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels²⁹. The Berlin Olympics were a resounding

²⁶ Avery Brundage was the 5th president of the International Olympic Committee from 1952 to 1972. He was the most controversial of the I.O.C. presidents. holding this position during a very difficult, politically tumultuous time, and his autocratic methods were unpopular. (source: <https://olympics.com/en/athletes/avery-brundage>, accessed on 05.12.2023).

²⁷ “Sport”, in *Minimum*, nr. 168/03.2001, p. 32.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ Paul Joseph Goebbels (n. 29.10.1897, Rheydt – d.01.05.1945, Berlin) was a German politician and Minister of Public Propaganda during the Nazi regime from 1933 to 1945. He was one of Adolf Hitler's closest collaborators and among the most

success. Only three years later, the organizers of the “Peace Games” would start the Second World War.

Elimination of the U.S.S.R. from the Olympic competitions in the interwar period was a fact often mentioned by the Soviet propaganda press during the Cold War years³⁰.

The international situation became tense as a result of the events in Hungary in 1956 and the conflict at the Suez Canal. Because of this, several countries withdrew from participation.

The end of the 60s marked the bipolar world that characterized the Cold War. The French student movement of 1968 shocked the entire Western world. On April 4, pastor Martin Luther King, the leader of the black population in the U.S. was assassinated in Memphis. On June 6, US presidential candidate Robert Kennedy was assassinated on camera, last but not least, the anti-communist movement in Czechoslovakia was drowning in blood. In this eventful political context, the Olympic Games in Mexico City represented a hope for reconciliation and peace. However, China has been declared undesirable for these Olympics and South Africa has been upheld its suspension imposed four years ago for its policy of racial segregation. The 1968 Mexico City Olympics were the first Olympics to experience a boycott. During the Tokyo Universiade (1967), a Japanese reporter recorded his warning to black American athlete Tommie Smith: “I cannot rule out the possibility that we black athletes will boycott the Olympics in Ciudad de Mexico.”³¹ Until before the departure of the American delegation, the boycott remained topical. Black American athletes, still reeling from the assassination of Martin Luther King, eventually participated in the Olympics, but in protest wore berets during the national anthem and held their fists in the air.³²

In 1968, the dictatorial regime in Mexico massacred 200 protesters who allegedly damaged the image of the Olympics in Mexico City. When dictators use the Olympics to sell a propaganda image, they are primarily doing politics.

“To ask opponents not to play politics when they have a good platform to get their message across is to take away one of their few advantages in a very unequal battle. Dictatorships have this problem, they don't let contrary messages get through, so

devoted followers of Nazi ideology (See: Peter Longerich, *Goebbels: A Biography*, New York, Random House, 2015, p. 5).

³⁰ P. Sobolev, “Pentru pace și prietenie”, in *Sportul popular*, nr. 2401/08.04.1954, București, p. 4 (article taken from *Sovietskii Sport*).

³¹ Tommie Smith (n.12.06.1944, Ackworth) was an Olympic champion in athletics (See: Gheorghe Mitra, Alexandru Retinschi, *op.cit.*, p. 404).

³² Gheorghe Mitra, Alexandru Retinschi, *op.cit.*, p. 44.

they will find an outlet with the Olympics. Democracies do not suffer from this mimed Olympic apoliticism.”³³

The most dramatic moment in the history of the Olympic Games was, without a doubt, the attack on the Munich Olympics in 1972. On September 5, 1972, eight Palestinians, members of the terrorist organization “Black September” entered the Olympic village and killed two members of the Israeli delegation (coach Moshe Weinberg and weightlifter Yossef Romano), taking 9 other athletes hostage. The terrorists demanded, in exchange for the release of the hostages, the release of the 200 members of the Palestine Liberation Organization imprisoned in Israel and their safe movement from Germany. The Israeli government announced in the afternoon of the same day that it would not negotiate with the terrorists. At 10 p.m., the terrorists and hostages were transported by three military helicopters to a military airfield. The German authorities opted for the forceful intervention of anti-terror troops when the terrorists arrived at the airport. as a result of the exchange of fire, the 9 Israeli athletes, 5 terrorists and a policeman died. After learning of the incidents at the airport, the Olympic competitions were suspended for 34 hours, the continuation of the Olympic Games being called into question, in the end it was decided to continue the competition. After the attack in Munich, the organizers of the Olympic Games began to pay a lot of attention to the security of the participants in the Olympics. Thus, at the next Olympic Games, held in Montreal, in 1976, the hosts developed a security device made up of 16,000 people, policemen, gendarmes and members of the security services. Unfortunately, the Munich Olympics were not the only edition of the Olympic Games where terrorism made its presence felt. Despite the extraordinary security measures (the security apparatus consisted of 30,000 people) taken for the smooth running of the Olympic Games in Atlanta in 1996, the July 27 attack in the Olympic Park could not be prevented, when a bomb placed in a garbage can caused the death of two people and the injury of another 110. The immediate effect of this attack was the decrease in the number of spectators who came to witness the various Olympic trials.³⁴

A week before the Munich Olympics in 1972, the “Rhodesia affair” was still on the front page of the newspapers. A former British colony, Rhodesia gained independence on October 24, 1964, taking the name Zambia. Salisbury's white minority applied a segregationist policy disapproved by the U.N. Not accepted to the Mexican Olympics,

³³ Cristian Ghinea, “Cine aduce politica la olimpiadă?”, in *Gazeta de Sud*, nr. 4103/9-10.08.2008, Craiova, p. 1.

³⁴ “Teroriștii nu respectă armistițiul olimpic”, in *Tribuna sporturilor*, nr. 534/11.09.2000, Sibiu, p. 8.

the Rhodesian Olympic delegation nevertheless participated in the Tokyo Olympics. The only condition for participation in the Munich Olympics was for the Rhodesian delegation to define its status. Ethiopia and Kenya demanded to see the passport of every Rhodesian athlete, a request approved by most African nations plus Pakistan and Yugoslavia. Just four days before the official opening, the C.I.O. imitated the U.N., excluded Rhodesia by 36 votes to 31. The 30 Rhodesian athletes, mostly white of British origin, had to return home.³⁵

Even the 1976 Olympic Games in Montreal were not without incidents. The first incident was the withdrawal of most of the delegations from Africa, following the refusal of the C.I.O. to suspend New Zealand from the Olympics as a result of the country's national rugby union team playing a friendly against a South African team (under Olympic embargo). Then there was the so-called "Taiwanese crisis", resolved by not receiving in Canada the delegation of Taiwan, whose athletes intended to represent China in Montreal.³⁶

The Soviet presence in Afghanistan led a number of Western countries, including the U.S. to boycott the Olympic Games in Moscow in 1980, refusing to send their athletes to the capital of the USSR.

Romania was the only country from the communist bloc that participated in the California Olympics in 1984, the other Moscow satellite states boycotting the competitions, as a response to the absence of the Americans and their allies from the Moscow Olympics. After almost a quarter of a century, the Olympic caravan arrived in Asia again, stopping in Seoul. The designation of South Korea as the host of the great competition sparked lively discussions in the "socialist camp."³⁷ After the boycott of the Olympic Games in the years: 1976, 1980 and 1984, there followed the Seoul boycott with the DPRK in the foreground. Korean and Cuban. The reason was South Korea's refusal to organize the Olympics together with the DPRK. Korean. However, no other communist country boycotted these Olympics. There were also absent states: Ethiopia, Seychelles and Nicaragua, but the reason was economic. The Games were honoured with the presence of 9,421 athletes from 141 countries. At the 24th edition of the Olympic Games, all previous records were broken: number of participating countries and athletes, number of sports and

³⁵ "Jocurile Olimpice de vară, ediția a XX-a, München 1972", in *Timpul*, nr. 162/22.07.1996, Reșița, p. 5.

³⁶ "Jocurile Olimpice de vară, ediția a XXI-a, Montreal 1976", in *Timpul*, nr. 162/22.07.1996, Reșița, p. 5.

³⁷ See Nicolae Stoian's article titled "Seul 1988", successively published in the daily newspaper *Cuvântul nou* from Sfântu Gheorghe, nr. 1659/16.07.1996, p. 6; nr. 2876/08.09.2000, p. 5; nr. 4048/29.07.2004, p. 3 și nr. 5195/17.07.2008, p. 6.

events included in the Olympic program, number of spectators, the most computerized and modern sports facilities.³⁸

Nowadays, the Olympic Games can be watched via television or the Internet, broadcasts that generate substantial profits for the organizers, from edition to edition through the lens of advertising and broadcasting rights. Broadcasting these events was and is an effective way of propaganda and promotion of the states' culture.

Over the years, from the first televised edition to the present day, broadcast rights on television channels have been an increasingly important source of income. If in 1960, when 395,000 dollars were paid for the transmission of some sequences of the Rome Olympics, in 1964 for the Tokyo Olympics) the amount increased more than three times, reaching 1,320,000 dollars, because in year 1968, at the Olympics in Mexico, to reach 4.5 million dollars. Since then, the amounts have increased, so that in 1972, at the Munich Olympics, television stations paid 7.5 million dollars, in 1976 at the Moscow Olympics), 87 million dollars. At the next Olympics, the one in Los Angeles in 1984, there was a huge jump, with receipts reaching \$225 million, and at the Seoul Olympics in 1988, the amount almost doubled to \$407 million.³⁹

³⁸ Horia Alexandrescu, "Seul 1988. Olimpiada Danielei Silivaş", in *Historia*, on-line edition, Bucureşti, source: <https://historia.ro/sectiune/general/seul-1988-olimpiada-danielei-silivas-571863.html> accessed on 09.12.2023.

³⁹ "Televiziunea și jocurile olimpice", in *Noi, românii din Ungaria*, nr. 33/14.08.1992, p. 16. For the transmission of the 4 editions of the Olympic Games from 2018-2024, the company Discovery acquired the exclusive rights worth 1.3 billion euros, for all platforms, including free-to-air TV channels, pay TV channels, online and on mobile, available in all 50 countries and territories in Europe. Discovery has committed to broadcast a minimum of 200 hours of the Olympic Games and 100 hours of the Winter Olympics on free-to-air TV channels during the competition. Discovery will sub-license a portion of the rights in several European markets. (See also the article "Comitetul Olimpic Internațional acorda Discovery și Eurosport drepturile de difuzare TV și pe toate platformele în Europa, pentru Jocurile Olimpice din perioada 2018 – 2024", in *Easy Engineering Magazine* accessed on 20.06.2015, source: <https://easyengineering.ro/comitetul-olimpic-international-acorda-discovery-si-eurosport-drepturile-de-difuzare-tv-si-pe-toate-platformele-in-europa-pentru-jocurile-olimpice-din-perioada-2018-2024/>).