

The Promotion of Human Rights at the Olympic Games: The "Samaranch" Era (Moscow 1980 - Sydney 2000)

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**THE PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
WITHIN THE OLYMPIC GAMES: THE “SAMARANCH” ERA
(MOSCOW 1980 – SYDNEY 2000)**

OCTAVIAN SOFRONEA

Abstract. The Olympic Games represent an homage paid to the supreme sporting event, which should remain a magical contest, full of passion and humanism. This competition needs to be protected all over the world, but now more than ever because of the usual excesses of violence, rivalry and nationalism, more or less explicit, or a series of complex situations, for example, Iraq, Afghanistan, countries in conflict in Africa, continued warfare due to poverty or excess of oil in Latin America and the Middle East, eternal Arab-Israeli conflict, migration, health threats etc. Paradoxically, the Olympic Games must be enjoyed and regretted for gaining so much importance. On a sports level they become increasingly significant despite the existence of world championships for each sports discipline, and from the social perspective the Olympic Games are the perfect scene for exposing at the highest level the demands, the protests, and the fight for protecting the fundamental human rights. This article analyzes how human rights were promoted within the Olympic Games during the period when at the presidency of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) was in charge Juan Antonio Samaranch. In 1980, Samaranch became the president of the IOC, a position he will hold for twenty-one years and which will allow him to manage two major revolutions of sport: women's participation in all Olympic competitions and economic expansion. With Samaranch at the helm, women had access to all the competitions of the men's program, except boxing and wrestling. Not least, professionals gained the right to participate officially, with athletes rewarded by sponsors before and after the competitions.

Keywords: *boycott; commercialism; human rights; Olympic Games; J.A. Samaranch.*

In February 1980, within the Winter Games held at Lake Placid, New York, the US President at that time, Jimmy Carter, is releasing an explicit idea of boycotting the Moscow Summer Games to protest against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of 1979. Some governments,

like those of Italy, Great Britain and Australia, supported the boycott but allowed the athletes to decide for themselves whether to go to Moscow or not. No such freedom of choice was allowed US athletes, as "Carter threatened to revoke the passport of any athlete who tried to travel to the USSR" (Caraccioli & Caraccioli 2008, 65). In the end, 65 nations turned down their invitations to the Olympic Games; more than a half did this because the boycott was led by USA.

With the Olympics being held in the United States only four years after the US boycott of the Moscow Games, nobody was surprised that the Soviet Union organized a revenge boycott in 1984. The uncertainty should have regarded only the pretext used by the Soviet Union with the satellite states to avenge on the Americans for the 1980 boycott of Moscow. The pretext was: "the temptations of the Californian metropolis, full of people with questionable intentions." (Alfred Senn 1999, 63). The International Olympic Committee did not agree, but could not punish the Soviets if it had not punished the United States four years ago. Therefore, the Olympics were held without the USSR and without the satellite states (with the exception of Romania and Yugoslavia, which were in full ideological conflict). But, China is finally present after an absence of 28 years due to the conflict with Taiwan and Haifeng Xu wins the first gold medal for this country in the shooting competition.

The challenge launched by the International Olympic Committee, respectively "to respond to three consecutive boycotts by taking the Games to a war zone, where the explosion of Olympic peace would be the most emblematic point", is won by Seoul, the capital of South Korea. Since 1980, the IOC is chaired by the Spanish from Barcelona, Juan Antonio Samaranch, "the great co-author of the modernization of the world sport, who was able to enrich his institution, guaranteeing to the television companies and the big commercial sponsors a scenography and an ideal scenario for the success of the show" (Caraccioli & Caraccioli 2008, 57). Only North Korea, Cuba, Ethiopia and Albania are missing from this edition. The world of the Games is restored, and in Seoul everything is going well. The organization is perfect and everyone is satisfied. The International Olympic Committee creates a new flag, the old one dating from 1920. At these Games tennis returned among the Olympic disciplines, after it was banned due to professionalism in 1924 in Paris (Senn 1999).

In 1992, the Olympic Games were held in the city of Samaranch, and King Juan Carlos pays homage to him, conferring the title of duke. The Olympic peace rediscovered in Seoul is exalted, proposed as a logical miracle of the sport. Three years before the Berlin Wall fell, and Germany was reunited. The only controversy concerned Yugoslavia, "which was the subject of United Nations sanctions because of its military aggression against Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina" (Miller 2013, 133). After the dismantlement of the USSR, the ex-Soviet republics participated as a Unified Team, with the exception of the Baltic States. At the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, "independent teams from Estonia and Latvia made their first appearance since 1936, and Lithuania fielded its first team since 1928" (Miller 2013, 132). South Africa was in the process of being readmitted and Cuba returns to the Olympic movement. Finally, there is a complete universality.

Starting with the way the Opening Ceremony was conducted, the Atlanta Olympic Games of the centenary anniversary "were, in fact, affected by an excess of commercialism, which, in the logic of the events, could have put a tax on the air that the spectators were breathing". Unfortunately, as soon as the Games began, it became clear that there were major organizational problems. The transportation system was overcrowded and chaotic, the computerized results system was primitive and failed repeatedly, and the volunteers, who staffed many of the sites, although well-meaning, were poorly trained. Moreover, "many people were appalled by the commercial exploitation that surrounded the competition venues, particularly around Centennial Olympic Park" (Senn 1999, 112). The park, which appeared to be part of the Olympics, was actually not included in the Olympic security system. As a consequence, "in the early morning of July 27, a bomb exploded in the park, killing one person and injuring 111" (Senn 1999, 112). A Turkish cameraman also died of a heart attack suffered while running to cover the scene. The crime remained unsolved until 1988, when the FBI connected the bombing with three others in Georgia and Alabama. In May 2003 anti-abortion extremist Eric Robert Rudolph was arrested for the bombings. He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to four consecutive life sentences (Senn, 1999).

The Sydney 2000 Olympics were the largest, “with 10.649 athletes taking part in 300 events, including for the first time, triathlon, taekwondo and synchronized diving” (Miller 2013, 147). Also, women’s events were added in weightlifting, water polo and modern pentathlon. A record of “80 nations won medals” (Miller 2013, 147). At Sydney Olympics the International Olympic Committee finally cracked down against doping. Gymnast Andreea Răducan of Romania was stripped of her gold medal in the all-around competition because her team doctor gave her pills containing a prohibited substance. It was a painful call (Răducan 2012).

Shadow of the past

No one can deny that Juan Antonio Samaranch was an iconic figure in sports administration during the fascist regime of General Francisco Franco in Spain, as evidenced by “his election to the National Olympic Committee in 1956 and his service as Spain’s Minister of Sports from 1966 to 1970” (Simson & Jennings 1992, 247). The facts were clear but how they were used is not. David Miller argues in his book, *The Olympic Revolution* that Samaranch was able to rise above any criticism of his involvement in administration during Franco’s era, but it was not easy to deal with such accusation (Miller 1995). It seems much more honest to consider that his complicity with dictatorship was, at a certain level, the price to be paid for someone who wanted to make a career in politics, economic or cultural fields, during the fascist regime. But Samaranch never tried to hide his past. On the contrary, “he mentioned in a 1998 televised interview with CBS that he was proud of his past” (Simson & Jennings 1992, 248). In this case, some might think that he was not judged harshly by his contemporaries during the country’s transition from dictatorship to democracy, because he continued to play a fundamental role in sports administration and above all, “in 1977 he was chosen by the Spain’s socialist government to be its ambassador to the USSR” (Simson & Jennings 1992, 249).

Whatever Samaranch's policy was before coming to the International Olympic Committee, he made remarkable efforts to democratize the

Olympic movement. He brought Jean-Claude Ganga, one of the main African critics of racial segregation, to the IOC as a representative of the Republic of Congo. The reintegration of post-apartheid Africa (7th of July 1991) was definitely a victory for democracy ensured for decades by the sanction of expulsion. Meeting Nelson Mandela, who visited the IOC headquarters in Lausanne in 1992, Samaranch stated: "I have been waiting for you for a long time." (Simson & Jennings 1992, 250) Also, even though Samaranch cannot assume all the credits for what seemed like a solution to the problem of the two China, who crushed Avery Brundage and Lord Killanin, it is true that under his presidency the People's Republic of China enters the Olympic movement. None of these actions suggest a nostalgic IOC president after his fascist past.

Until the scandals of 1998, opposition for Samaranch within the IOC did not exist, but criticism from the media and the academic community rather limited represented by historians concerned about the sport, was not lacking. The most serious accusations are found in *The Lords of The Rings*, published in 1992 by Vyv Simson and Andrew Jennings. They accused Samaranch of supporting the fascist regime of General Francisco Franco: "He was loyal to the fascist regime until the end" (Simson & Jennings 1992, 247). Also, they blamed Samaranch for the determination with which, as president of the IOC, he exploited the commercial potential of the Olympic Games, for the obvious indifference to the question of doping, and for what they considered a shameful attitude, respectively the appetite for power. Each of these accusations will be analyzed later within this article.

Promotion of women in sport

Samaranch's approach regarding the women's sports does not suggest a president stuck in traditions of inequality. Since he assumed the presidency of the IOC in 1980, there was a transformation of the role of women within the Olympic movement. Statistically, "at Moscow Olympics in 1980, 18% of the athletes were women; in Atlanta 1996 the percentage doubled" (Tricard 2008, 74). Today, women compete in several sports competitions, such as football, ice hockey and weightlifting after being

introduced in 1996, 1998 and 2000 respectively, sports they did not have access before. Actually, during Samaranch's presidency women gained access to all male competitions except wrestling (introduced at Athens Games 2004) and boxing (introduced at London Games 2012).

The number of women in the International Olympic Committee also increased, even if it happened gradually. The first two women elected as IOC members in 1981 at Baden-Baden Olympic Congress were Flor Isava Fonseca of Venezuela and Pirjo Haggman of Finland, breaking the 86-year male monopoly. In 1995, five years after the election of Canadian Carol Anne Letheren, the famous Czech gymnast, Vera Caslavská, became the eighth woman member of the committee. In 1996, Mary Allison Glenn-Haig retired from the IOC, but Swedish Gunilla Lindberg and Chinese Shengrong Lu are admitted to the Committee (Tricard 2008, 105-106).

Women have also made modest progress when discussing their participation in national Olympic committees and international sports federations. Samaranch told members of the IOC Executive Board at the December 1994 meeting in Atlanta that "there is a moral obligation to increase women's access to positions of responsibility in sports management at national and international levels." (Chappelet & Kubler-Mabbott 2008, 143). In 1995, "only 5 of the 196 National Olympic Committees and only 2 of the 34 international sports federations were run by women" (*ibid.*). At the 105th session of the IOC, just before the Atlanta Olympics, "the Committee decided that by December 31, 2000, the National Olympic Committees and International Sports Federations should reserve at least 10 percent of their legislative and executive positions for women and also the percentage should be doubled by December 31, 2005" (Chappelet & Kubler-Mabbott 2008, 144). The proposals for sanctioning the National Olympic Committees that fail to include women athletes in the Olympic teams were made a few months before the 1996 Atlanta Games, but they did not win the support of the council because "they offended most of the Islamic states whose religious principles do not allow women to appear with their bodies in front of men" (*ibid.*).

Economic expansion

The accusation that under the leadership of Samaranch the Olympic movement was commercialized and sold to the most powerful bidding corporations, it is more difficult to answer than accusations about the fascist past of the IOC president. Economic factors, such as those that motivated the choice of Atlanta over Athens that would have celebrated the centenary of the Olympic Games in 1996, now play a much larger role in this event than the political factors, like those which favored Sydney over Beijing in 2000.

The IOC's initial agreement with International Sports, Culture, and Leisure Marketing, signed in 1985, "generated 95 million dollars by the end of 1988." (Payne 2006, 205) The nine multinational corporations that participated in what was to be called TOP I (The Olympic Program I) increased to twelve for TOP II. Eight of the nine corporations continued as global sponsors (Coca Cola, Phillips, Kodak, Visa, Matsushita, Kodak, Brother, Time and 3M), one retired (Federal Express), and four other new corporations joined the program (Mars, UPS, Bausch & Lomb, Ricoh). Hundreds of other corporations have paid smaller contributions to become sponsors of the Albertville Winter Olympics or the Barcelona Summer Olympics. Taking into consideration these facts, "TOP II has grown to about 175 million dollars." (Payne 2006, 206) TOP III reduced the number of sponsors worldwide to ten, and "the price of sponsorship has increased from 25 million dollars to 40 million dollars." (Payne 2006, 206) With the addition of four official suppliers (Mercedes, Lufthansa, John Hancock and Ricoh), approximately 350 million dollars was the increase by the end of 1996. For TOP IV, which ran the program in 2000, there were twelve worldwide sponsors and "a total of 350 million dollars in additional sponsorship revenue." (Payne 2006, 207).

A result of this aggressive attitude of a marketing program was reaching one of the most important Samaranch's goals, respectively to reduce almost all dependence of IOC on television rights sales, despite the fact that this source continued to grow. Canada's IOC representative, responsible for media negotiations, Richard Pound, has been as effective as his predecessor, the French Jean de Beaumont. After a drop in revenue "from 325 million dollars at Winter Olympics in Calgary to 292 million

dollars for Albertville, the Lillehammer Winter Olympics brought more than 350 million dollars.” (Payne 2006, 207). For the television rights of the games in Nagano, CBS paid more than 375 million dollars, and the contracts with European and Japanese networks have brought in a total of over 500 million dollars. The television rights of the Summer Olympics in Barcelona and Atlanta were “awarded for 636 and 900 million dollars respectively” (Miller 2013, 268). After securing US rights for the 2000 Sydney Summer Games and the Salt Lake Winter Games for the fabulous amount of 1.2 billion dollars, “NBC contracted in December 1996 the television rights for 2004 and 2008 Summer Olympics and the 2006 Winter Games for an incredible amount of 2.3 billion dollars” (Payne 2006, 208).

In the official history of these years, *The presidency of Lord Killanin (1972-1980) and Juan Antonio Samaranch (1980 – present)*, written in 1996, Fernand Landry and Magdeleine Yerles argue about gaining economic “autonomy”. While it is undeniable that Killanin and Samaranch raised IOC funds substantially, autonomy is not the most appropriate term to describe the situation. If the IOC had sufficient resources to pay its bills and support the institution, to distribute several million dollars to the national Olympic committees under the aegis of “Olympic Solidarity” meant that the strongest sponsors and television networks were expecting something in return for their generous support. Critical voices emphasized the fact that “Atlanta, which is the headquarters of Coca-Cola, was elected in 1996 over Athens, which a century earlier, in 1896, was the starting point for the modern Olympics” (Miller 2013, 272).

The influence of the media during the Olympic Games is obvious to any viewer. From here comes the familiar problem of advertising. The invasion of commercials made the spectacle of the Opening Ceremony of the 1992 Barcelona Games difficult to understand for those watching the event on TV. In US, for example, NBC's 456 million dollars bid for the Atlanta Olympics has been accompanied by expansion requests for gymnastics competitions, as there was widespread popularity among viewers. The considerable number of commercials and the obstruction of the logos caused a significant drop in the rating during the 1998 Nagano Games, which led to an increase in advertisements, as NBC had to

comply with its obligations towards advertising agencies, driving away more people from this event (Payne 2006).

The decline in rating was even more dramatic during the Sydney Olympics. Advertisements were just part of the problem. NBC had televised recordings of certain events in the sports competition that were many hours before. Viewers who listened to the radio or read the morning papers already knew the results of these competitions. The commentators added an insult to the existing damage by analyzing a competition that had already been played live, assuring viewers that it was difficult for a gymnast to win a gold medal if she fell off the beam (Bairner 2001).

Corruption allegations

An effect of the Los Angeles Olympics was to dispel the spectrum of debt that has followed the Olympic scene since the financial disaster of 1976. After 1984, several metropolitan centers were amazed by both prestige and profit. In 1986, six cities bid for the 1992 Games. At the end of 1997, there were 11 candidates for the 2004 Games. The presentations became extremely elaborate and costly. Barcelona, for example, "hired 750 people to carry out a six-volume promotion file" (Miller 2013, 278). In this raving atmosphere, "city delegates sued IOC members and overwhelmed them with costly temptations, including, according to IOC critics, the company of some of the most welcoming women" (Guttmann 2002, 178). In response to these rumors, "the Executive Board voted to limit the number of gifts and their value to the IOC members" (Simson & Jennings 1992, 263).

The failure to accept these limits has led to the strongest bribe scandal in the history of the Olympic Games. On June 16, 1995, Salt Lake City, Utah, won the bid to host the 2002 Winter Olympics. On November 24, the channel KTVX from Salt Lake City reported that the local organizing committee paid for a scholarship for Sonia Essomba, daughter of Cameroon IOC member Rene Essomba (Simson & Jennings 1992). Moreover, to this scholarship totaling about 400,000 dollars "various IOC members or their relatives received generous vacations, expensive

medical treatments, very expensive gifts and other money directly" (Simson & Jennings 1992, 269). According to a report written by the Ethics Board of the organizing committee, on February 9, 1999, "Jean Claude Ganga and other members of his family were offered 115.000 dollars for transportation expenses; Ganga was treated for hepatitis, his mother-in-law underwent a knee replacement surgery, his wife underwent cosmetic surgery, and Ganga received 70010 for other personal needs" (Guttman 2002, 178).

While insisting that there is no possibility for the 2002 Winter Games being relocated from Salt Lake City, Samaranch promised a fast investigation and the removal of those found guilty. On December 15, 1998, he announced the formation of an ad-hoc commission under the presidency of Canadian Richard Pound. During the commission's investigation, Bashir Mohammed Attarabulsi (Libya), Pirjo Haggman (Finland), Charles Mukora (Kenya) and David Sikhulumu Sibandze (Swaziland) resigned from the IOC. Six other members were excluded when the IOC met in a special session on March 17, 1999, respectively Zein El Abdin Abdel Gadir (Sudan), Sergio Santander Fantini (Chile), Agustin Arroya (Ecuador), Jean Claude Ganga (Congo), Lamine Keita (Mali) and Seiuli Paul Wallwork (Samoa). Nine other members received warnings.

They were not the only ones who were investigated. The Swiss Marc Hodler, who told the press that corruption also altered bids for Atlanta and other Olympic cities, "found out that he had become persona non grata in the eyes of several of his colleagues, and when the IOC selected Turin to organize the Olympic Games in the winter of 2006, several commentators argued that the Committee rejected the possibility that the Games would be organized by the city of Sion in Switzerland to express their opposition to Hodler" (Chappelet & Kubler-Mabbott 2008, 196).

Considering that two-thirds of those who lost their jobs were African or Pacific Islander citizens, critics accused the International Olympic Committee of racism. They claimed that Australian Phillip Coles and Guatemalan representative Willi Kaltschmitt Lujan were honored with a trip to Florida for the Super Bowl worth about 20.000 dollars (Guttman 2002, 179). Coles and Lujan should have been forced to resign. Another personality who escaped only with a warning was South Korean Kim Un-yong who applied for a fictional job for his son. He managed to keep

his place on the IOC executive committee and the position as president of the General Association of International Sports Federations. It happened because he was a close friend of Samaranch, and critics demanded Samaranch to take full responsibility for these things and to resign, but he refused and, above all, received a unanimous vote of confidence from the IOC (Simson & Jennings 1992).

The Salt Lake City scandal was a direct consequence of the remarkable amounts of money the Olympics had begun to make. However, to a certain extent, there is a less obvious relationship between the commercialization of the Games and the death of the amateur-professionalism dichotomy. While the material gain was never the only reason athletes participated in the Olympic Games, its importance cannot be denied. The temptation of material gain cannot be eliminated, and "when this gain, following a victory, takes the form of a million-dollar contract, not just a symbolic car, more and more athletes are tempted to make sports a profession, not just a passion" (Guttmann 2002, 179). Sprinter Leroy Burrell made this point in unequivocal terms: "We do not play this sport because we like it, but because we want to make money" (Guttmann 2002, 180). One reason why the IOC finally dropped the rule of amateurism was because of this awareness that Olympic sport is no longer a passion. Until 1980, when Samaranch came to power, rule 26, which limited the Olympic Games to amateur athletes, became irrelevant. The imaginary call to pure amateurism, a position held by Simon and Jennings in *The Lords of the Rings*, is undeniably naive. The realistic solution was to open the Games to the best performers on the planet and simultaneously improve the revenue from television to the IOC.

Even though there was opposition from some communist members of the IOC, who preferred that their professionals continue to compete against the Americans, the reformers prevailed. Athletes such as Michael Jordan, Wayne Gretzky or Steffi Graf were welcomed to the Olympics, and their devoted fans were attracted in front of the TVs. More viewers have meant higher prices for commercials, which leads to the motivation of networks to pay more for the rights to cover the Games, which ultimately brings more money to the International Olympic Committee.

This type of business has not developed from one day to the next. As mentioned earlier, the road to the fully open Olympic Games began under Killanin's presidency and accelerated during Samaranch. In 1984, "international sports federations were allowed, with certain limits, to set the rules for eligibility to participate in the Olympic Games" (Chappelet & Kubler-Mabbott 2008, 198). In 1986, a commission chaired by the German Willi Daume proposed a Code of Athletes to replace Rule 26, which established the eligibility criteria, and "in November 1987, the IOC voted to receive professional tennis players at the Olympic Games" (Chappelet & Kubler-Mabbott 2008, 198). At the 95th session of the IOC, held in San Juan in 1989, the invitation was also made to other professional athletes. In the following year, the IOC approved the Athletes Code as Rule 45. The next edition of the Olympic Charter, published in 1991, explains eligibility in one sentence: "To be eligible for participation in the Olympic Games, a competitor must comply with the Olympic Charter as well as with the rules of the international federation approved by the IOC, and must be entered by his national Olympic committee" (Olympic Charter 1991). After sixty-seven years of controversy, the IOC returned to the situation in 1924, when the Olympic Charter stated: "The definition of an amateur sportsman is established by the International Federation that governs that sport" (Guttmann 2002, 181).

Drugs

The IOC's policy regarding the use of drugs to increase sports performance is another controversial topic. Samaranch's critics, notably Simson and Jennings, argued that his repeated statements against the use of anabolic steroids and other banned substances were just words. Although his critics acknowledge that he had a strong position against the use of such substances, they draw attention to the concrete facts of using drugs to improve performance and they accused that nothing was actually done to solve the problem.

It is very difficult to prove such accusations and even it is clear that some athletes used banned substances between the Olympic Games, such as RDG athletes, Marita Koch or Barbel Wockel, who took anabolic

steroids twice more than Ben Johnson, there is no clear evidence that the IOC encouraged such attitude. On the contrary, in 1966, "the IOC established a medical commission headed by the New Zealand Arthur Porritt, and in 1968, anti-doping testing was conducted for both the Summer Games in Mexico City, and the famous Winter Games in Grenoble" (Guttmann 2002, 182). Led by Samaranch and the Prince of Belgium, Alexandre de Merode, the IOC has sponsored a number of international conferences on banned substances, the most important being the one in Ottawa from June 1987. The laboratories authorized by the IOC "analyzed almost 100,000 urine samples a year and only 2% were tested positive" (Guttmann 2002, 182).

While no objective observer can think that these tests are good enough to detect the use of banned substances in each of the athletes who use steroids, it is important to note that the IOC has taken position against several dedicated international athletes. For example, Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson in Seoul 1988 or Irish swimmer Michelle Smith in Atlanta 1996 can be considered two concrete examples in this regard. It is very difficult to believe that these champions played the role of scapegoats while the IOC had intentionally neglected other athletes. The desire to increase national prestige certainly tempts the National Olympic Committees to cheat. Systematic surveillance by the state regarding the use of prohibited substances by the German Democratic Republic can be considered a dramatic example, but Samaranch has always delimited himself of this type of nationalism and condemned it as a violation of the international spirit of Olympism. Even if the IOC's efforts to eliminate banned substances were ineffective, there is no reason to question Samaranch's sincerity (Chappelet & Kubler-Mabbott 2008).

Power and influence

Of all the accusations against Samaranch, the most difficult to assess is the claim that he would have made efforts to strengthen and increase his personal power and influence in the international sports world. His critics considered him "a more sophisticated version of Brundage" (Miller 2013, 218) and claimed that they have some evidence in this

regard such as the fact that Samaranch was responsible for dismissing Monique Berlioux from her position as IOC director. At the end of the presidency of Brundage and throughout Killanin, Monique Berlioux became too strong to be tolerated by a personality like Samaranch, determined to save an organization that operated more from inertia. There is no doubt that Samaranch used his influence to bring the 1992 Games to his hometown of Barcelona, just as Pierre de Coubertin used his personal prestige to bring the 1924 Games to Paris.

Behind the public activity, Samaranch worked with a very strong group that the critics called *The Club*. At one point, its members included Horst Dassler, the Adidas owner, whom a former partner, Patrick Nally, characterized him as “the puppet master of the sports world” (Miller 2013, 218). Dassler has invested in international sport, culture and market expansion, commercializing the Olympic Games to colossal brands such as Coca-Cola or other well-known sponsors. Through Adidas, Dassler teamed with Primo Nebiolo, the head of the International Amateur Athletic Federation whom Samaranch brought into the IOC, where he was among the most influential members. Nebiolo advanced, becoming the head of the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations. Moreover, Dassler allied with another very influential member of the IOC, Brazilian Joao Havelange, the head of the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA). Other influential members I could identify were: the Mexican Mario Vasquez Rana – the president of the Association of National Olympic Committees, the South Korean Kim Un-yong – the president of the General Association of the International Sports Federations and Robert Helmick, the head of the United States Olympic Committee. This was in fact club diplomacy, where a small and powerful group of people managed to influence the entire IOC.

The fact that Samaranch worked with these powerful and influential personalities it is no secret. Samaranch relied on them and, without too much hesitation, received the support he needed. It was a relationship with mutual benefits, for example “in August 1995, in Budapest, when Samaranch was close to retirement, they supported him to raise the limit from 75 to 80 years, in order to run for another mandate in 1997” (Chappelet & Kubler-Mabbott 2008, 146). Although the attempt

failed at the beginning, three days later, the motion was reviewed and a second vote followed, which was favorable. Canadian Richard Pound, who opposed the change, said the change so fast makes the IOC "a laughing stock" (Guttmann 2002, 180). Nebiolo, Havelange and Vasquez Rana used their influence to swing the vote in the direction of Samaranch.

It is difficult to say whether, in Budapest or elsewhere, *The Club* violated the provisions of the Olympic Charter or conspired to control IOC. The charges were quite strong, especially against Nebiolo and Havelange, but Helmick and Kim Un-yong were the only members against whom conclusive evidence was presented; "Helmick resigns from this group and also leaves the IOC in December 1991 for conflict of interest accusations" (Bairner & Molnar 2010, 78).

For an objective perspective, we should also mention that during Samaranch era the membership of the IOC was granted to a number of people very close to non-democratic regimes such as, for example, the Sheikh of Kuwait – Fahd Al-Ahmad Al-Jabar Al-Sabah or Prince of Saudi Arabia – Faisal Fahd Abdul Aziz. However, the number of such members was unquestionably lower than in any period in the last fifty years of the twentieth century. Another observation is useful in this regard, respectively if *The Club* controlled the IOC, it is difficult to say why Sydney was the city preferred to organize the Games and not Beijing, the main counter-candidate who was supported by Havelange, Nebiolo and Vasquez Rana. Some historians characterize Samaranch as "a Machiavellian figure who survived through bribery and corruption" (Bairner & Molnar 2010, 81) but it is difficult to independently check such assessments beyond rumors and insinuations.

It is curious that one of the accusations launched to Samaranch is that he was emotionally involved in the creation of an Olympic Museum. He has been a strong supporter of this project and has raised money largely from private donations. Designed by Jean-Pierre Cahen and IOC member Pedro Ramirez Vazquez, "it was officially opened on June 23, 1993, near the IOC headquarters, at Chateau de Vidyla Lausanne, being an imposing structure" (Chappelet & Kubler-Mabbott 2008, 73). His exhibitions present an unpublished history of the Olympics, a celebration and not a critique of Olympism.

Samaranch was also ridiculed for his visit to Sarajevo in February 1994, where, on the 10th anniversary of the 1984 Winter Olympics, he “called for an end to the bloody ethnic conflict that had taken place three days before and who accounted many lives lost in the massacre on the city's public market” (Chappelet & Kubler-Mabbott 2008, 128). Although this gesture and the frequent calls made by Samaranch for an “Olympic truce” were considered naive, they were made in the spirit of the Olympic Games, as built by Pierre de Coubertin, respectively for the promotion of international peace and reconciliation.

No matter what Samaranch's colleagues believed about him regarding his role as a pacifist, they did not threaten his position when the Salt Lake City scandal erupted, voting for the reform of the governing of the Olympic movement. In December 1999, “the 82 members of the IOC 2000 Commission brought 50 recommendations to the IOC Extraordinary Session” (Chappelet & Kubler-Mabbott 2008, 170). These were accepted. With the Salt Lake City scandal in mind, it was decided that future Olympic cities would be evaluated by a special commission. IOC members who were not involved in the evaluation committee and were forbidden to visit the cities bidding for the organization of the Games. After the Sydney Olympics, “the following will have only 280 competitions and each national Olympic committee will have the right to send at least six athletes to the Games” (Chappelet & Kubler-Mabbott 2008, 170). From the last decision benefited the National Olympic Committees because they could send athletes even if they did not meet the qualification standards.

The reform did not stop at this point. It was also voted that the IOC may have a maximum of 115 members. Of these, “70 will be individual members, 15 chaired by the national Olympic committee, 15 members of the international sports federations and 15 athletes who participated in the Olympic Games within four years of their election” (Miller 2013, 243). Except these athletes, the other members must be elected for a period of 8 years. The mandatory retirement age was set at 70, and the IOC president can be elected for a first mandate of 8 years, followed by a second mandate of maximum of 4 years (Miller 2013) Taking into consideration these new directions, Juan Antonio Samaranch continued to work until 2001, when he was replaced by the Belgian Jacques Rogge.

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