
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Working Documents

1981 - 1982

27 April 1981

DOCUMENT 1-149/81

Interim Report

drawn up on behalf of the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education,
Information and Sport

on the Olympic Games

Rapporteur: Mr G. ISRAEL

1.2.1

At its sitting of 13 February 1980 the European Parliament referred to the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport the motion for a resolution tabled by Mr Sarre and Mr Moreau on the Olympic Games (Doc. 1-767/79).

At its meeting of 24 February 1981 the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport appointed Mr Israel rapporteur.

At its meeting of 18 and 19 March 1981, the committee decided to draw up an interim report.

It considered the motion for a resolution at its meetings of 18 and 19 March 1981 and 13 and 14 April 1981.

It was adopted at the latter meeting by 14 votes to 4 with 1 abstention.

Present: Mr Pedini, chairman; Mr Kavanagh and Mr Hahn, vice-chairmen, Mr Israel, rapporteur; Mr Berkhouwer (deputizing for Mrs Pruvot), Mr Bøgh, Mr Brok (deputizing for Mr del Duca), Miss De Valera (deputizing for Mrs Weiss), Mrs Gaiotti de Biase, Mr Hutton, Mr Johnson (deputizing for Mr Cottrell), Mr Langes (deputizing for Mr Henckens), Mr Papapietro, Mr Patterson, Mr Sälzer (deputizing for Mr Wedekind), Mr Schall, Mr Schwencke, Mrs Viehoff and Mr Vlahopoulos.

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The Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport hereby submits to the European Parliament the following motion for a resolution together with explanatory statement :

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

on the Olympic Games

The European Parliament,

- concerned at the steady deterioration of the spirit of the Olympic Games;
- aware of the danger to the Olympic ideal of using the Olympic Games for purposes of partisan propaganda or commercial publicity;
- regretting this trend, which is not conducive to the establishment of a climate of peace and cooperation in the world;
- considering that the Olympic Games can become once again a worldwide festival , extolling the ideal of friendship among peoples and the brotherhood of man;
- considering that the holding of the Games in different countries of the world leads to an attitude of rivalry which is detrimental to the basic principle of the universality of the Olympic Games and imposes major financial sacrifices on the host countries;
- considering the serious events which affected the organization of the Games in 1936, 1972 and 1980;
- believing that the Olympic Games should continue;
- having considered the Greek Government's proposals regarding the designation of Olympia as the primary site of the Olympic Games;
- having taken particular account of the Greek Government's proposal to establish an international extraterritorial status for the Olympic site;
- having regard to the motion for a resolution by Mr Doublet of 15 January 1981 (Doc. 1-798/80);
- having regard to the resolution of 15 February 1980 adopted by the European Parliament¹;
- having regard to the report adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 26 September 1980;

¹ OJ No. C 59, 10.3.1980, page 57

- having regard to the report of the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport (Doc. 1-149/81):

1. Expresses its interest in and support for the Greek Government's plan to play permanent host to the Olympic Games and, in particular, to designate the Peleponnese as their primary site;
2. Considers that the rules governing the conduct of the Games must be re-examined with a view to eliminating any expression of national chauvinism and that the principle of amateurism must be rigorously safeguarded;
3. Requests the Committee on Youth, Culture, Education, Information and Sport to continue its studies and consultations in order to table a final report at a part-session in 1981;
4. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Commission, the Council, the President of the IOC and the Secretaries-General of the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

EXPLANATORY STATEMENTA - The raison d'être of the games

1. Greek philosophical and political teaching left its stamp on a whole civilization and the idea that physical development is essential to human expression is also present in Greek thought. Plato saw in mathematics and music the perfect harmony of the mind and, with all the other masters of Greek philosophy, he reserved a special place for gymnastics, the source of harmony of the body.

But the two ideas could not be separated from one another. The organization of public games had to comply with quite specific philosophical principles. As an opportunity for the different Greek peoples to meet, the Olympiads were above all an opportunity for cultural and artistic exchange. They also assumed that individuals should come to know one another better in a common desire for peace, forgetting the constant subjects of argument and confrontation, to compare what could be done in the arts and philosophy, not forgetting, of course, physical competition. Everyone was aware that they were endeavouring to push back the limits of human capacity in a sort of humanist attempt to increase the scope of man's skills by comparison with those of the gods.

To achieve this ambitious objective it was of course necessary for men to be at peace with one another. Thus the Olympic Games assumed the existence of a truce, an interruption in the conflicts which might arise between the Greek citizens.

From 776 B.C. and for almost 12 centuries the Olympic Games therefore represented the consecration of a human ideal of brotherhood, peace and achievement. 'Aesthetes' and athletes together expressed the whole human condition.

The interruption of the games in 393 A.D. followed the spread of Christianity in the Roman Empire. Pagan festivals were banned and in 447 the order was given for temples dedicated to Greek or Roman divinities to be destroyed...

2. At the end of the 19th century, when Europe was experiencing a long period of relative peace, the idea of resuming the tradition of the Olympic Games in the modern era was able to take shape.

In 1894, on the initiative of the Frenchman Pierre de Coubertin, an International Olympic Committee (IOC) was set up.

In 1896 the first Olympic Games of the modern era took place in Athens. Four years later, as part of the events marking the turn of the century, the experiment was repeated, this time in Paris.

Gradually the IOC grew to be a guardian of the traditions, forging for itself a philosophy of neutrality in accordance with the Olympic ideal. Thus bit by bit the Olympic spirit was reborn.

By force of circumstances this sporting gathering tended to disregard somewhat the other aspect of the Olympic tradition associated with the 'esthetic' development of mankind. But the cessation of conflict, the truce, was in everybody's mind essential to the proper running of the games, in the same way that the universal nature of the games was essential precisely in the interests of competition.

Therefore, with the exception of the periods covered by the two World Wars, the Olympic Games took place almost normally and confirmed the renewal of a thousand-year-old tradition which had as its birthplace a remote area of the Peloponnese, a place formerly inhabited by the gods: Olympia.

B - International relations and the universal character of the games

I. Sport in a political world

While the various Greek peoples were often in conflict throughout the whole of antiquity, western countries have also experienced a great many periods of confrontation. Despite the efforts of those who have always wanted human sporting activity to be neutral, it is becoming progressively inevitable that sport will be used as a weapon in the competition between the nations. Poor nations will wish to prove that their physical strength greatly surpasses their economic development, in that way expressing their desire for power. Rich and developed nations will want to demonstrate to the whole of humanity their superiority and their ability to exceed the power of any other state. Competition between individuals becomes competition between nations. The enormous proportions which the Olympic Games have now reached is obviously the inevitable consequence of this fact.

Serious events occurred on the eve of the Second World War and in the 1970s.

In 1936, the organization of the Olympic games in Berlin gave Hitler an opportunity to obtain a kind of certificate of good conduct from the international community against the background of a panoply of flags bearing the swastika. If a country which already had racial laws and a concentration camp could express the Olympic ideal, the source of peace and friendship between the peoples, on its own soil and with the blessing of everyone, it was now obvious that the very idea of the Olympic Games bore the signs of death.

But the Second World War, which brought the whole of Europe to the brink of destruction, to some extent erased the mistake of 1936 and the International Olympic Committee was only too pleased to be able to pick up the torch again and organize the first post-war games in 1948.

Nevertheless, the world was not at peace. The emergence of new nations, the end of colonialism, the ideological expansionism of certain states, and the revolutions which were profoundly changing the life of the peoples, gradually shaped the new profile of the world. It was then obvious that the Olympic Games would be facing new challenges.

In 1970, the Union of South Africa, which practises a policy of apartheid towards black people, was excluded from the Olympic Games. Thus the idea was becoming clear that sport and politics were not as easily separated as was believed. Thus, also, it was necessary to try to return to the sources of the Olympic ideal and show that a country practising a policy of domination and racism was seriously contravening the principle of equality of mankind as defined long ago by the Greeks. Rhodesia was similarly excluded two years later.

At the 1972 Olympic Games, there occurred the gravest event in the whole history of the games. Israeli athletes were murdered by a Palestinian terrorist commando. This massacre took place practically under the eyes of tens of millions of television viewers. It was clear that henceforth the Olympic Games could provide an opportunity for demonstrating hate, while drawing the attention of the whole world to a particular political cause, whether legitimate or not. The fact that the games have recovered from such an attack is in itself very surprising.

Olympism is now dedicated to draconian security measures, which are obviously in conflict with the Olympic ideal. World sporting events will never be free from the threat similar to that which has hung over the Olympic Games since Munich.

In 1980, in Moscow, however, it was a danger of a different kind which struck the Olympic ideal. Could the games of brotherhood be organized in a country which six months previously had invaded another and which was continuing to wage an unequal war against an unarmed mountain people? Could one repeat - mutatis mutandis - the mistake made in Berlin in 1936? Forty one countries said no and did not take part in the Moscow games. It was felt to be impossible to bring together the representatives of the Youth of the world in a place which symbolized the subjugation of youth elsewhere. Moreover, the USSR kept away from the Olympic sites all those who intended to demonstrate in favour of freedom. In reaction to this attitude, of course, certain governments invoked the allegedly sacrosanct principle of the separation of politics and sport. But it soon became confirmed in the popular conscience that it was not possible to make an artificial separation between the practice of sport and respect for fundamental freedoms as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

2. Olympism and human rights

If there is one useful means of circumventing the argument seeking to separate sport and politics it is by reference to human rights. The answer

to the question of whether a particular country respects fundamental freedoms does not involve a political assessment of the worth of the regime of the country in question. The yardstick of 'human rights' is sufficiently defined by international texts such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, or the conventions adopted by the UN in 1966, not forgetting the international or regional conventions on the same subject. Freedom of movement, freedom of expression, freedom of thought or creed, civil or political freedoms, the right to non-discrimination, the right to flee persecution, the right to a decent standard of living are indisputable and have to be recognized by all countries who wish to have the honour and the benefit of receiving the games of brotherhood on their territory.

But this does not mean that human rights must be used as a political weapon in the East-West or North-South confrontation. The demand for fundamental freedoms can only be made outside any ideological war. It is precisely in an area such as Olympism that human rights have their greatest importance and in which they can be invoked with absolute justification.

Could one imagine the International Olympic Committee formally endorsing the principle that the games can only be arranged in countries which respect human rights?

The difficulties are obviously considerable. The International Olympic Committee cannot be an international court of human rights responsible for judging the attitude of nations.

On the other hand, there could be no question of preventing the citizens of a country which violates human rights from being represented at the Olympic Games. The sins of the governments should not be visited on the athletes.

The practice therefore should be that a country which flouts human rights cannot hold a central place in the organization of the games. All countries may some day have something to reproach themselves with in regard to human rights... but the games have to take place somewhere...

3. Sport and modern world wide means of communication

The enormous importance of the Olympic Games is also revealed in the fact that mass means of communication are involved on a huge scale. 'Mondiovision', the presence of all the broadcasting organizations and all the newspapers of the world, the massive publicity impact of these games in themselves and the 'leisure activities' outside the games, the masses of spectators, mean that their effect is felt throughout the world and a spirit of festivity takes hold of the youth of all countries.

A number of countries or organizations are therefore naturally tempted to take advantage of the incredible resources employed for the Olympic Games for the benefit of their own propoganda.

No-one can resist this temptation, with the exception of the poor countries, who obviously are unable to organize such meetings on their own soil without ruining themselves.

The sporting competition itself is a huge machine for creating world stars. The victory of a man or of a woman is a victory for a whole nation. The triumph of a coloured man is a triumph for a whole class of people. The success of a national from a developing country is a victory for the poor over the industrialized countries.

Thus gradually and by virtue of the exceptional publicity given to the games, the Olympic ideal itself is being undermined.

The authors of the motion for a resolution which is the subject of this report, together with Mr Doublet, in his motion for a resolution, Doc. 1-798/80 of 15 January 1981, consider that only by altering the way in which the Games are organized will it be possible to rid them of any spirit of chauvinism. One possibility might be to dispense with the playing of national anthems and the raising of the winner's national flag after each event. (Likewise, rigorous safeguarding of amateurism remains essential to the proper conduct of the Games.) Although this decision, which is probably a very difficult one, must rest with the IOC, the European Parliament is determined to assert its views on the subject.

C - A single and permanent site for the games

1. The Greek Government's proposals

In the face of this progressive deterioration in the Olympic idea, the Greek Government took the initiative of proposing the adoption of a single site for the Olympic Games and making Greece the permanent setting for the games.

In a first letter dated 31 July 1976 and addressed to Lord Killanin, at that time President of the International Olympic Committee, Mr Konstantin Karamanlis, the then Prime Minister of the Republic of Greece, pointed out in connection with events which conflicted with the Olympic principles: 'it is obvious that abuses of this type, irrespective of the causes underlying them, are in contradiction with the Olympic spirit and the high principles on which this spirit has been based. If these violations are multiplied every four years - which unfortunately seems to be the case - the institution of the games will one day and very soon come to an end'.

The world of business is itself captivated by the games. From the sale of sophisticated broadcasting equipment or instrumentation to the simple publicity jersey, business throughout the world is involved.

Mr Karamanlis also denounced excessive publicity methods and their links with financial interests. He referred to the fashion of making certain athletes into stars and deplored the revival of chauvinist sentiments.

Mr Karamanlis said it should be obligatory for conflicts to be discontinued as a prerequisite for participation in the Olympic Games.

Following the invasion of Afghanistan and the difficulties it was assumed would ensue for the organization of the games in Moscow, Mr Karamanlis wrote to Lord Killanin on 1 February 1980 proposing, 'as he had done in his letter of 31 July 1976, that Greece should be nominated as the permanent site for the Olympic Games.

Mr Karamanlis stated that in his view 'no country was entitled to ask for the games to take place permanently on its territory other than the one which had given birth to the Olympic idea and which had proved capable of bearing the heavy privilege of conducting them for thousands of years at a time. I also believe that the choice of Greece as the permanent site for the games is the only way of rehabilitating this institution and restoring to it its real meaning. In this way the Olympic ideal will no longer be involved in international ideological and political conflicts or be the object of the star system, professionalism and commercial exploitation and the financial problems which it creates in its present form'.

Mr Karamanlis added that Greece intended to offer a site which it deemed appropriate for the permanent running of the games on the actual site of ancient Olympia.

According to Mr Karamanlis, 'this site could assume the status of a neutral territory on the basis of an international agreement guaranteeing the rights relating to the installations, enshrining the inviolability of the site and recognizing the vital role of the Olympic Committee in its responsibilities for sport. Greece is, in any case, prepared to discuss the arrangements which your committee considers necessary for this purpose'.

The Greek proposal immediately aroused lively interest amongst public opinion. A distinguished Australian, Mr MORISSON, former Minister for Defence, wrote in the 'Sydney Morning Herald' on 27 July 1976: 'The solution of the problem would be to reestablish the whole sporting apparatus in Olympia, with the financial assistance of all those countries taking part in the Olympic Games'. In the United States, the 'New York Times' wrote on 21 July 1976: 'To improve the games they would have to have a permanent site in Greece. All the participating countries should contribute to the cost, thus ensuring that the games acquire finance independence'.

Finally, the London 'Observer' published a reader's letter saying: 'The only long-term solution to the Olympic problems would be for the games to take place again and permanently in Greece'.

Your rapporteur has been able to establish that the proposals contained in the letter from Mr Karamanlis to Lord Killanin of 1 February 1980 still apply.

It is therefore on these proposals that the European Parliament should give its opinion.

2. The political and organizational difficulties

(a) Decision-making procedure

A decision of this scope naturally requires the definition of a clear procedure. All countries traditionally taking part in the Olympic Games have to approve the project and they would, therefore, each have to waive the honour of welcoming the games on their territory.

The first solution would be for the International Olympic Committee to take the decision itself. Many governments traditionally rely on the committee on all matters concerning the organization of the games.

But it might also be considered that the decision is of such importance that it would not be desirable for the governments to waive the right to take this type of decision themselves. The financial investment, the diplomatic arrangements and the organization itself would be more precisely a matter for a joint decision by the states concerned. It would therefore seem necessary to conclude an international convention governing all aspects of the problem.

It is for this reason that your rapporteur felt that the decision he is recommending should be brought to the knowledge not only of the International Olympic Committee but also of the Secretaries-General of the Council of Europe and the United Nations.

(b) Finance

The first figure to be defined would be that for the implementation of a global study of the cost of the operation. Your rapporteur reserves the right to examine with the representatives of the Greek Government, before presenting his final report, the total cost of the preliminary study, which will include a first approximation of the total investment.

As for financing the operation, the Greek Government would obviously be unable to cover the cost itself. The question should therefore be examined as to whether the European Investment Bank or even the World Bank could not contribute a large part of the total investment.

(c) Position of the International Olympic Committee

For the moment the International Olympic Committee has not made known its official position on the proposals set out by Mr Karamanlis in his letter of February 1980.

Unofficial and informal contacts which your rapporteur has been able to make show that the committee does not seem to have reacted favourably on the project. In any case it would appear that a majority of its members, in the first analysis, are not in favour of the Greek Government's idea.

It is conceivable that the European Parliament might take up the case for the project and make direct contact with the International Olympic Committee? This would not be absolutely impossible, in the rapporteur's opinion, but the Greek Governemnt would first have to state that it did not itself intend to make this type of approach in the initial stages.

(d) The site

It will be seen that the 1976 letter from Mr Karamanlis refers to only one possibility for Greece accommodating the Olympic Games. Mr Karamanlis had not stated in his first letter that the Olympia site in the Peloponnese seemed to him appropriate. On the other hand, in his letter of February 1980 he specifically nominated Olympia as a suitable site.

If Olympia is finally chosen as the primary site of the Games, the promoters of the project will have to work with a site practically devoid of installations capable of accommodating a large number of visitors.

The fact of starting from scratch will considerably increase the cost of the operation. Furthermore, the means of communication with the rest of the world will have to go through Athens and Patras, which are 363 and 133 km respectively from the proposed site.

Admittedly, the choice of other places in Greece for certain events is not to be ruled out but in that case they could not enjoy the extra-territorial status referred to below. The important thing in the last analysis is that, by playing host to the opening and closing ceremonies and the principal events, Olympia could symbolize the Olympic spirit of political neutrality and the suspension of hostilities.

(e) The extraterritorial status of the Olympia site

The Greek Government would be prepared to examine with the decision-making authority the establishment of an extraterritorial status for the Olympic site. In this connection various questions are of course still unresolved. Which authority would be responsible for the site? Who would look after maintenance of order? Who would administer the Olympic entity?

All these questions will be put to the Greek Government during the visit which your rapporteur expects to make there. But the principle of making Olympia an independent territory seems to provide a suitable answer to the problems referred to above.

(f) The Winter Olympics

The Winter Olympics pose a special problem. Greece seems unsuited to the organization of winter sports. Other countries, moreover, do offer a suitable climate for such events, the main contenders being the Alpine countries, the United States, Canada, the Scandinavian countries and Japan. The principle of alternation should therefore be retained in the case of the Winter Olympics.

(g) Foreseeable difficulties

There are a number of practical problems and the first is the use that can be made of the sports and hotel facilities in the intervals between the Games.

The Olympic stadia and hotel infrastructure could not be left abandoned. Plans would therefore have to be made for their use, even on a limited basis, in the period between the games.

Various ideas could be put forward, in particular the opening of permanent schools for training in sporting disciplines, a sort of world university of sport, the organization of festivals in the summer, and meetings and international congresses connected with sport. But 100% utilization of the facilities can only be expected during a relatively short period every four years.

It is important to bear in mind that millions of spectators and thousands of participants in the games gathered together at a site like Olympia would need outside recreational activities. When the events come to an end in the evening, thousands and thousands of people would certainly like to be able to go to the cinema or the theatre, have a drink on café terraces, attend concerts. This also presupposes a great deal of organization.

The transport infrastructure with continental Greece, the rest of Europe and the world will also raise considerable problems: the establishment of international airports, the opening of motorways to take a large volume of traffic, rail links for freight.

Finally, your rapporteur feels that attention should be drawn to the ecological danger which the establishment of the huge Olympic complex might represent.

The Peloponnese, because of the tranquillity, silence, size and majesty of the area, is one of the privileged regions of the world. The choice to be made is of considerable importance and the Greek Government will have to say precisely how it intends to define the Olympic site so as to isolate it from the rest of the Peloponnese.

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Your rapporteur considers that the resolution submitted to you can be adopted, since it should allow a thorough study to be undertaken.

The approval of the ten countries of the Community, as well as of the countries of the Council of Europe who, on 26 September 1980, adopted Resolution No 738 on the Olympic Games and their future prospects, would provide a considerable driving force.

In all conscience, your rapporteur considers that if the International community is intent on saving the Olympic Games by depoliticizing them, the only solution would be to examine closely but sympathetically the possibilities offered by the Greek Government.

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION DOCUMENT 1-767/79

tabled by Mr G. SARRE and Mr J. MOREAU
pursuant to Rule 25 of the Rules of Procedure
on the Olympic Games

The European Parliament,

- Concerned at the steady deterioration in recent decades of the spirit of the Olympic Games, which are used increasingly as a weapon of national and international politics, a regrettable trend which is not conducive to the establishment of a climate of peace and cooperation in the world,
- 1. Considers that this opportunity for sportsmen of the world to meet should be preserved;
- 2. Hopes that the Olympic Games may once again become a cultural, universal and fraternal festivity;
- 3. Is accordingly prepared to investigate possible ways of achieving this in the future, whether by dispensing with national anthems and flags or by setting up an 'Olympic enclave';
- 4. Hopes to see a new charter drawn up, based on respect for the sporting spirit and ruling out any exploitation of the Games by business interests.

