

THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE AND THE GERMAN QUESTION

A Case Study of the Role of Transnational Organizations
In the International System

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Kenneth Garrett
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INTRODUCTION

Why Study Transnational Organizations?

When one thinks of the Olympics, the first images that come to mind are athletic prowess, national pride and international goodwill. Even among political scientists steeped in theory, thoughts concerning the Olympics rarely extend to an analysis of the political power of the organization behind the Olympic Games, the International Olympic Committee. This is not an unusual omission; the influence of transnational organizations has only recently become the subject of scholarship, signaling a long overdue recognition of this important component of the international system.

The usual explanation for this failure to consider the role of transnational organizations is that states operate on the level of “high politics,” specifically in the military/security dilemma, whereas most non-state actors do not. The fact that security is principally the domain of states leads to a state-centered view of international relations at the expense of consideration of other important actors. For theorists of the dominant “realist” school of thought, economic, social and cultural interactions are less relevant. Therefore, the organizations that specialize in these domains of international life are also deemed to be relatively insignificant.

Such a narrow view of the international system precludes acknowledgement of the essential role played by non-state actors. Instead of using some vague definition of “power” or a baseless hierarchy of issue areas to deem states “more important” than non-state actors, as do realists, scholars should recognize that states and non-state actors are similar in their efforts to implement policies using all the resources and bargaining

positions available to them. Simply being a state does not give one actor a better bargaining position in every conflict than any given non-state actor. "Some NGOs [non-governmental organizations] probably have more power and influence in their respective fields than some of the smaller nation-states."¹ Assuming a basic level of peace and security, the economic, cultural and social activities in which transnational organizations specialize are extremely important to the average person and are worthy of study. It is within the interactions among *all* actors in the international system, not just one "important" subset, where scholars will find some of the most interesting questions facing the international system today. To completely understand the nuances of international relations, therefore, one must acknowledge and analyze the role played by transnational organizations.²

Why Study Sport?

Having demonstrated that transnational organizations are important actors in the international system and therefore worthy of study, it would be instructive to select a type of transnational organization that to the greatest degree possible ignores race, class, nationality, religion, and gender. To do otherwise would render any conclusions applicable only to limited segments of the international system.

¹ Kjell Skjelsbaek, "The Growth of International Nongovernmental Organization in the Twentieth Century," *International Organization* 25, no. 3 (1971): 435.

² I borrow from Samuel P. Huntington's definition of a "transnational organization." In this paper, a transnational organization is a private organization that is not necessarily tied to any single nation, which attempts to perform its operations with the greatest disregard possible for national borders. It is important for the reader to juxtapose a transnational organization with an "international organization," which is in this paper an organization made up of representatives of national governments, and relies on those governments for all of its power.

Samuel P. Huntington, "Transnational Organizations in World Politics," *World Politics* 25, no. 3 (1973).

“No other institution, except perhaps religion, commands the mystique, the nostalgia, the romantic ideational cultural fixation that sport does.”³ Almost everyone, even if he does not himself engage in sport, understands the obsession of the majority. The thrill of victory, the agony of defeat, and the sense of accomplishment from having completed a goal are universal and are readily found in almost every athletic contest. Sport is truly a common global language.

In addition to the fact that many people throughout the world care about sport, it is also ideal for a study of transnational relations because sport is, by its very nature, political. There are unambiguous winners and losers. In international competition, where athletes represent a particular nation, a fan cannot help but feel that if his nation's team defeats another nation's team, at least in one small way his nation is better than the other. Any person interested in international sport between 1960 and 1990 will probably remember the dominance of East German athletes. Their athletic prowess provided a strong sense of national superiority of which their nation's propaganda organs made great capital. A 1958 edition of the Soviet newspaper *Pravda* explicitly acknowledges the propaganda value of sport: “An important factor in our foreign policy is the international relations of our sportsmen. A successful trip by the sportsmen of the USSR or the people's democratic countries is an excellent vehicle of propaganda in capitalist countries. The success of our sportsmen abroad helps in the work of our foreign diplomatic missions and of our trade delegations.”⁴

³ James H. Frey and D. Stanley Eitzen, "Sport and Society," *Annual Review of Sociology* 17 (1991): 504.

⁴ Richard Espy, *The Politics of the Olympic Games* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 4, and Henry Ashby Turner, *Germany from Partition to Reunification* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 218.

Sport is also a safe place to engage in a “metaphoric war between nation-states.”⁵ In sociological terms, sport is an arena of “...structured conflict and competitiveness in controlled settings rarely found in other aspects of social life.”⁶ International sport competitions are basically cultural exchanges, and the competitions themselves are ideally politically neutral. But it is commonly believed that “better” states field more successful athletes. Athletic competition therefore parallels—or at least dramatizes—political competition, but does not necessarily carry the same potentially destructive consequences. While there is nothing ambiguous about a military victory, sport is a malleable foreign policy tool because leaders can shade the significance of a competition depending on political intent.⁷ Leaders field athletes to demonstrate the superiority of the nation that sponsored them. “The glamour and attractiveness of the Olympic Games and the fact people care give Olympic performances great political significance and weight.”⁸

Due to the near-universal love of sport and the fact that feelings of national pride enter the mix, the field of international sport is bound to be one in which international interactions become heated. International conflicts within the sporting world offer a microcosm of the political world; because sport is universal, what happens in sport is applicable to the larger world. It is therefore enlightening to study transnational organizations that speak this universal language.

⁵ Alfred Erich Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games* (Champaign: Human Kinetics, 1999), xii.

⁶ Frey and Eitzen, "Sport and Society," 504.

⁷ Espy, *The Politics of the Olympic Games*, 4.

⁸ Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games*, x.

Why Study the International Olympic Committee (IOC)?

The International Olympic Committee is undoubtedly the most powerful, respected and widely known transnational organization in the field of sport. In addition to the Olympic Games themselves, most regional games and world championships fall under the jurisdiction of the IOC. The constitutions and bylaws of the international and national sport federations, the national Olympic committees and the individual games organizing committees are subject to approval by the IOC. Simply put, “the authority of last resort on any question concerning the Olympic Games rests in the IOC.”⁹ Even where the IOC does not have direct juridical control over a sport organization, most athletes follow IOC regulations so as to avoid being disqualified from Olympic competition. “Thus, although the IOC has neither a foundation under international law nor a membership that includes states or subjects of international law, many members of the international community have treated it as if it indeed had international personality.”¹⁰ Some IOC regulations have even taken on the status of international law in that some IOC “rules, regulations and decisions help determine state practice and best articulate a customary or autonomous sports law.”¹¹

Sport is also a hugely profitable economic enterprise. The IOC, because of its control over sport, has great control over access to much of this wealth. In the United States, for example, “the commercial factor [of sport] is so prominent that even a Gross National Sports Product (GNSP) has been calculated. In 1988 the GNSP was \$63.1 billion. This places the sport GNP twenty-second on the list of the top 50 industry GNPs,

⁹ James A.R. Nafziger, "International Sports Law: A Replay of Characteristics and Trends," *American Journal of International Law* 86, no. 3 (1992): 491.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*: 491, 93.

ahead of the automobile, petroleum, and airline industries.”¹² More specifically to the Olympic Games, “Olympic officials claim that 90 percent of the world’s television sets tuned in for some part of the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta.”¹³ The income from advertising produced at each Olympic Games must be staggering; television advertisers are therefore willing to pay huge sums to the IOC for such a rare and lucrative advertising opportunity. In addition, the average American consumer would be hard-pressed to shop for a month’s worth of groceries without running into at least one product that claims it is “proud to be an official Olympic sponsor,” even in a non-Olympic year. Such corporate partnerships add to the television proceeds to form the bulk of the IOC’s capital base.

In addition to its juridical and economic power, the IOC controls the athletic competitions that capture the minds and hearts of the entire world every four years.¹⁴ In essence, the IOC is important because a significant number of people like what it does, and would be very unhappy if political machinations caused an interruption in the performance of Olympic sport.¹⁵

The prominent position the IOC holds in the world of sport has always afforded it a great deal of media attention. This attention translates into a great deal of symbolic authority for the IOC, especially in its power to grant recognition to nation-states. In a discussion of the increasing political influence of the IOC in the second half of the 20th century, noted Olympic historian Richard Espy explains that “the IOC, by recognizing a country’s committee or by recognizing a certain name, in effect was conferring political

¹² Frey and Eitzen, “Sport and Society,” 508.

¹³ Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games*, xviii.

¹⁴ The IOC also oversees the Winter Olympic Games, held for the first time in 1924. To minimize confusion, I rarely refer to the Winter Games, and specify when I am doing so.

¹⁵ “Statement from the IOC Concerning Political Interference in Sport” sent to the World Press on 26 March, 1962 by Avery Brundage; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the GDR’s NOC for 1962.

recognition although the IOC had no formal diplomatic status....Each country that participated thereby received de facto recognition....The national name, and participation under that name became all-important.”¹⁶

There is considerable evidence to suggest that states do in fact deem recognition by the IOC to be an important form of legitimacy. For example, the Arab states threatened to boycott the Olympic Games of 1948 if the IOC recognized Israel. “To play together would be construed as a form of cooperation, and the Arab states objected to the very existence of the Jewish state.”¹⁷ IOC recognition was obviously significant to the Arab states in terms of legitimacy; otherwise they would not have cared about Israeli recognition.¹⁸ There was a similar uproar when the IOC considered recognizing two Chinas, this time in the United States. President Eisenhower and Ambassador to the United Nations Cabot-Lodge expressed their disapproval in public, and the International Security Subcommittee of the U.S. Senate put pressure on IOC president Avery Brundage by issuing a subpoena, which it later rescinded.¹⁹ These august personages clearly assigned a significant legitimating power to IOC recognition, further demonstrating the influence of this transnational actor.

The Olympic Movement has political significance in addition to its power to legitimize states. “The XIII Olympiad marked the beginning of the postwar Olympics. In the future the Olympics, as a global media event, would have greater worldwide impact as the ideal forum for the expression of political issues.”²⁰ Consequently, there

¹⁶ Espy, *The Politics of the Olympic Games*, 29.

¹⁷ Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games*, 118.

¹⁸ Espy, *The Politics of the Olympic Games*, 29.

¹⁹ Allen Guttmann, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 93.

²⁰ Espy, *The Politics of the Olympic Games*, 30.

are numerous examples of the Olympic Movement becoming involved in political events either as an actor itself or as a forum within which other actors could operate. Among the more famous incidents was the “Nazi Olympics” of 1936, during which Hitler and Goebbels intended to demonstrate the superiority of the Aryan race. Also of note were South Africa’s exclusion from the Olympic Movement because of apartheid, the decision whether to accept two Chinas in the IOC, and the terrorist-led hostage standoff at Munich’s Olympic village in 1972, which ended in the death of 11 Israeli athletes. More recently, the Olympic Movement weathered the boycotts of the 1980 and 1984 Olympic Games by the Western and Eastern Cold War blocs, respectively, averted boycotts of the 1988 Seoul games, and withstood criticism for granting the 2008 Olympic Games to Beijing despite Chinese human rights abuses.²¹ Much to the chagrin of many inside and outside the IOC, it has been an organization very much involved in politics since its birth in 1896.

In short, the IOC is the largest and most important transnational organizations in the domain of sport. It controls one of the most beloved human activities, and is therefore a promising choice to tell us something about transnational organizations in the international system.

Why Study the “German Question” in the IOC?

With so many political incidents in IOC history, it is beneficial to select one for close analysis based on its ability to most powerfully demonstrate whether the claim that transnational organizations have influence among states in the international system is

²¹ John E. Findling and Kimberly D. Pelle, eds., *Historical Dictionary of the Modern Olympic Movement* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996).

correct. The “German Question” of whether there existed two sovereign German nations after World War II, because it was a focal point of the Cold War, provides just such a case. Most correctly assume that the vast majority of political questions were controlled by the superpowers during the Cold War, and that their immense power left no room for the influence of any other actor. It was, after all, the Cold War that gave most credence to the state-centered paradigm of international relations. To explain how a transnational organization like the IOC was able to influence international affairs according to its own agenda in a region where the Cold War came close to becoming “hot” would be a significant demonstration of the essential role played by transnational organizations in the international system.

The German question is also appropriate for studying the role of transnational organizations in the world because the IOC has an extremely long history with Germany, and especially with the German question. Germany was one of the original members of the IOC, and even played host to the last Games before WWII in 1936. The pre-war German National Olympic Committee (NOC) applied for re-recognition by the IOC as soon as it was able after the war, so the IOC was a part of the German question from the beginning. It is therefore possible to analyze how the IOC’s methods and motivations changed in relation to the development of the German question itself.

Objectives

After a careful historical analysis of the development of the IOC’s German policy compared to the parallel developments of the Cold War, it will be possible to make some claims about how transnational organizations operate in the international system. Was

the IOC an initiator that influenced international affairs? Did it simply react to and reflect political realities with no voice of its own? Was it perhaps somewhere in between these extremes? Did its role change over time? These are the questions I intend to answer in the course of analyzing the IOC's methods and motives with regard to the German question and the historical circumstances that allowed the IOC to enjoy whatever influence it enjoyed. From these findings, I intend to develop a more generalized theory of the role of transnational organizations as actors in the international system.

CHAPTER 1

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Olympic Movement: A Brief History from 776 BC to 1950 AD

From the eighth century BC until 393 AD, the Ancient Greeks celebrated the Olympic Games at Olympia as a tribute to the gods. Originally a local affair, the oracle of Delphi reportedly suggested expanding the games as a means of lessening the endemic warfare that was plaguing the Greek peninsula. During its height in the sixth and fifth centuries BC, the games hosted the best athletes from each Greek city-state, competing in approximately twenty sporting events. An Olympic truce meant that warfare ceased every four years for the duration of the games, allowing as many as 40,000 people to travel to Olympia to cheer for their athletes in the predominantly martial competitions.²²

The games gradually declined in importance after the fifth century BC as the center of world power began to shift toward Rome. With the spread of Christianity the Olympic Games, because they were a pagan festival, declined in popularity until the emperor Theodosius abolished all pagan festivals in 393 AD. The ruins of Olympia were looted and dismantled to build other structures, and the Olympics were remembered only in myth and art for the next 1500 years.²³

In the late 1800's, archaeological excavations at Olympia inspired French aristocrat Baron Pierre de Coubertin to spend six years traveling around the world to various sport organizations lobbying for the revival of the Ancient Olympic Games. In 1894, a delegation of 12 countries meeting in Paris voted unanimously to form an

²² Wei Yew, ed., *The Olympic Image* (Edmonton: Quon Editions, 1996), 19-20.

²³ Ibid.

International Olympic Committee. The committee was duly constituted, and the first games were staged in Athens in 1896. Two hundred ninety-five male athletes representing 13 nations participated. The games have been held every four years since, with the exceptions of 1916, 1940 and 1944 because of the World Wars.²⁴

The Structure of the IOC after World War II

During the period in question, 1949-1972,²⁵ the International Olympic Committee was a group of men chosen by current members of the IOC not to represent their countries in the IOC, but to represent the IOC in their countries. Members were and are therefore expected to be defenders of the Olympic Spirit rather than of their own nation's goals. The IOC was headed by an elected president and an executive board, which handled the day-to-day affairs of the IOC and periodically reported to the full session of the IOC. Before the Court of Arbitration for Sport was set up by the IOC, the IOC was the final judge on all matters pertaining to Olympic sport. Because of the extensive travel involved in being an IOC member, most of the members were wealthy, and many were of noble or royal birth.²⁶

Hierarchically beneath the IOC are the National Olympic Committees (NOCs). Each is responsible for promoting the Olympic Movement in its own country, and each has "exclusive authority over the representation of its respective country at the Olympic

²⁴ Ibid., 23-24.

²⁵ In 1949 the IOC recognized the National Olympic Committee of West Germany, implicitly to the exclusion of a second one in the East, thereby planting the seeds of the German Question in the IOC. 1972 was the first year the NOCs of East and West Germany competed with completely independent teams in a summer Olympic Games, marking the full resolution of the German question in the IOC.

²⁶ IOC, "The Olympic Movement," (Lausanne, Switzerland: IOC, 2001).

Games.” The full session of the IOC must recognize an NOC in order for it to legitimately carry out these functions.²⁷

When a city was chosen by the IOC to host the Olympic Games, the NOC of the country in which that city lay would form an Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games (OCOG). This committee then received direction directly from the IOC, and was responsible for staging the Olympic Games.²⁸

Outside of this hierarchy but also under the umbrella of the IOC were the International Federations (IFs) of individual sports. The IFs are “international non-governmental organizations recognized by the IOC, which govern their own sports on a world level.”²⁹

Germany and the IOC

In the first Olympic Games of the modern era, Germany finished third in the medal count with 15, behind Greece (47) and the United States (19).³⁰ Berlin was awarded the 1916 Olympic Games, which were later cancelled due to war. In keeping with the punitive mood against Germany after World War I, it was barred from participating in the Olympic Games until 1928.³¹

Marking the full reintegration of Germany into the world of sport, Berlin was granted the Olympic Games of 1936.³² Despite a huge uproar in the United States over the Nazi’s racist policies and despite considerable agitation for boycott on those grounds,

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Yew, ed., *The Olympic Image*, 24.

³¹ Findling and Pelle, eds., *Historical Dictionary of the Modern Olympic Movement*, 69.

³² Guttmann, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games*, 53, and Findling and Pelle, eds., *Historical Dictionary of the Modern Olympic Movement*, 85.

the American Olympic Association (later renamed the United States Olympic Committee) decided to attend the Games anyway, based largely on a favorable report by the young president of the AOA and future president of the IOC, Avery Brundage. It is difficult to know whether Brundage was actually convinced that the Nazis were going to host a fair, non-political Olympic Games. In his defense, Nazi propagandists did go to great lengths to tone down racism and paint a favorable picture of Hitler's Germany for the world to see.³³ It is known, however, that Brundage was personally sympathetic to the Germans; he had many German friends from his sporting days, and was not fond of the American protesters who he derogatorily assumed were Jews and Communists. In the final analysis, Brundage loved the Olympic Games for their own sake, and would have done everything possible to save the Games from an American boycott.³⁴

From all outward appearances, the Berlin Games of 1936 were a resounding success. The Nazis hosted the most spectacular and perfectly organized Games in Olympic history. Some Jews who appeared "Aryan" were allowed to participate for publicity's sake. Although Hitler refused to congratulate him, African-American Jesse Owens was undoubtedly the hero of the games, at the expense of his "Aryan" competition. To most observers, Germany was able to "prove its peaceful intentions and its wish to work with other nations." Hitler's deception during the Olympic Games became clear when only two weeks after their conclusion he approved a "four year plan" to prepare for the war which would soon destroy Europe.³⁵

In contrast to the punitive mood after World War I, the victors of World War II wanted to reintegrate Germany into the international system as soon as possible so as to

³³ Guttman, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games*, 68-69.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

³⁵ Findling and Pelle, eds., *Historical Dictionary of the Modern Olympic Movement*, 91-2.

prevent reactionary elements such as the Nazis from regaining power. On May 10, 1950 the High Commissioner of the Control Commission for Germany wrote to a vice-president of the IOC that “the objective of the allied policy towards Germany is that she should become in all senses a member of the community of peace-loving and democratic nations.” Realizing that international sport could be an important vehicle for the reintegration of the German people themselves, the victorious allies urged the IOC to accept the Germans back into the fold as soon as possible. In the same letter, the High Commissioner continued, suggesting “...that an invitation to Germany to re-enter the field of international sport would be one of the best possible steps that could be taken to show the youth of Germany that their collaboration is desired in the pursuit of peace and to develop contacts between them and the youth of other nations.”³⁶ The IOC, however, was aware of the almost universal hostility toward the Germans, and withheld recognition for fear of boycotts and damage to the Olympic Movement.³⁷

German sport leaders were aware of the IOC’s reservations, and actually went as far as to apologize to the IOC for the atrocities and mistakes of the Nazi regime during World War II.³⁸ As a result, the pre-war German members of the IOC were reinstated on May 8, 1951, even though at least one of them was himself a trusted Nazi.³⁹ The IOC

³⁶ Letter from General Robertson to Lord Burghley, 10 May, 1950; IOC Archives, Minutes of the May 1950 IOC Session, Copenhagen, Annex 3.

³⁷ Espy, *The Politics of the Olympic Games*, 32.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

“Il tient d’emblée à exprimer de sincères regrets au nom de la Jeunesse Allemande pour les cruautés commises par les criminels nazis qui ont sali le nom de l’Allemagne. La jeunesse allemande veut servir la cause de l’olympisme et désire collaborer sincèrement avec celle du monde entier, en vue d’une paix future.”

“He makes a point from the start of expressing sincere regrets in the name of German Youth for the cruelties committed by the Nazi criminals who have sullied the name of Germany. German Youth want to serve the cause of the Olympic ideal and wish to collaborate sincerely with those of the whole world, for a future peace. (translation by Kenneth Garrett)

IOC Archives, Minutes of the August 1950 IOC Executive Board meeting, Lausanne.

³⁹ Article dedicated to Rudolf Harbig; Avery Brundage Collection Reel 72, Box 129.

members from the nations who suffered the most under the Nazis would have preferred the election of new German members, but IOC President Edstrom pulled a trump card; the old German members were his friends.⁴⁰

Significantly, the IOC assumed (at least from all outward appearances) that the re-recognition of the old German NOC was the only German question to be dealt with, and that after such recognition the issue would be closed. They completely ignored the territorial division of Germany, apparently under the assumption that Germany's role in the IOC would remain identical to what it had been before the war; the entirety of German sport presumably would be led by this same all-German NOC. After all, they had no reason to think otherwise.

The Beginnings of the Cold War in Germany

What the IOC understandably failed to foresee was the Cold War. The four victorious allies—France, Great Britain, the US and the USSR—had partitioned Germany into zones of occupation and soon had disagreements on many issues, foremost among them the German economy. The USSR felt entitled to large reparations, and took extensive agricultural and industrial infrastructure from their own zone in the eastern part of Germany. As the USSR dismantled the East Germans' means to feed themselves, more United States food aid was provided to sustain the population; in essence, the US was paying reparations to its own supposed ally via food aid to East Germany. This was an unacceptable situation for the West, so the economy of Germany was split in two to stop the direct transformation of US aid into Soviet reparations.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Guttman, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games*.

⁴¹ Turner, *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, 13, 14, 68.

The German people wanted national unity, and correctly felt that the occupation powers were keeping them apart for their own political reasons. Yet whenever the Germans tried to develop plans for a new unified government, serious political differences between the authorities in East and West Germany precluded agreement. The US and England tired of waiting for a final peace agreement, so they began unifying their zones and eventually brought the French zone in too. Technically, they were supposed to consult the USSR before a move of this magnitude, but they failed to do so. In 1947, when the Marshall Plan was rejected by the USSR on behalf of its zone of occupation, the economic differences between what in 1949 became the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG; West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR; East Germany) were solidified.⁴² The “iron curtain” between the Eastern and Western blocs described by Winston Churchill in 1946 was becoming increasingly well-defined.⁴³

The “opening shot” in the Cold War came when the western allies decided in 1948 to implement currency reform in their now united zones of occupation. Realizing how great of a unifying agent this would be in the western zone, the USSR began to physically blockade the city of Berlin. Essentially, it was holding the city hostage, hoping to starve and freeze its residents, until the western allies agreed to stop unifying their zones of occupation without the USSR’s input. Far from cowing the western powers, however, the blockade only served to bolster their resolve to unify their zones outside the Soviet orbit. They became determined not to lose all of Germany to communism, a system that would do something as cruel, ridiculous and heavy-handed as hold a city hostage. The western allies also became so emotionally tied to one another

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Paul Halsall, *Internet Modern History Sourcebook* [web page] (Fordham University, 1997 [cited]); available from <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/churchill-iron.html>.

during the highly successful Berlin airlift that the USSR began to see this “Western bloc” as the greater threat to the USSR, rather than a revanchist capitalist Germany.⁴⁴

After four years without official agreement, it was clear in 1949 that Germany was for the present a divided country, but not necessarily two sovereign nations. At first, the two governments that had been established were similar enough to be compatible in the event of a breakthrough in the unification process. The GDR actually promised many rights uncharacteristic of communist countries, providing an illusion of compatibility of values with the West. The FRG, for its part, purposely created a weak and provisional constitution so that it could easily be scrapped, and even settled its capitol in the admittedly unsuitable city of Bonn in the hope that the selection would be temporary. The leaders of both sides continued to speak in favor of unification, blaming the other for the impasse.⁴⁵

It was not long, however, before the leaders of the GDR began to ignore the rights granted to the East German people and run the country as a Stalinist dictatorship.⁴⁶ The FRG continued to claim that it was the sole legitimate German government, and would remain so until the people of the Soviet Zone were able to vote freely and fairly. The economic conditions in the two sides continued to diverge, as the West enjoyed a US-led economic miracle while the East continued to pay exorbitant and unaffordable reparations to the USSR. The people of the East could see on western television and radio broadcasts, or in person by visiting West Berlin, how miserable their lives were in

⁴⁴ Turner, *Germany from Partition to Reunification*.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 38, 48, 51, 53-4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 58, and Carola Stern, *Ulbricht: A Political Biography*, trans. Abe Farbstein (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1965), 153.

comparison.⁴⁷ This realization, coupled with intellectual and religious repression, led hundreds of thousands of people to flee to the West. In 1952, the GDR fortified the border with West Germany, hoping to stem the tide of refugees. Berlin, however, remained a physically united city throughout the 1950s, providing a well-used exit path for desperate East German emigrants.⁴⁸

In June 1953, an uprising by East German workers was a huge blow to the legitimacy of the East German government. The introduction of communism to East Germany had been directed by the Soviets and their puppets, and was therefore never a legitimate socialist revolution of the people. When the workers—the very people to whom communism was supposed to appeal—revolted, the leaders of the GDR appeared illegitimate. At that point, the USSR wanted to negotiate German unification so as to relieve itself of the liability of being associated with the incompetent East German government, but never did negotiate for fear of losing face.⁴⁹ There was a temporary thaw in the repressive policies of the East German government after 1953, but it did not last for long.

As the repression increased in the later 1950s, the exodus of East Germany's most talented citizens also increased to the point that it was both embarrassing and economically damaging. It was clear that the GDR's hopes of convincing people not to emigrate despite the open border had fallen flat; the leaders saw no choice but to hold their own citizens prisoners. Accordingly, in the early morning of August 13, 1961, the East German authorities began constructing a concrete and barbed wire wall around the entire city of West Berlin, cutting off completely this last open route to the West and to a

⁴⁷ Norman Naimark, "Is It True What They're Saying About East Germany?," *Orbis* 23, no. 3 (1979): 560.

⁴⁸ Turner, *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, 65.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

better life. The East German government claimed the wall was built to prevent a supposedly imminent western invasion via West Berlin, but no one was fooled.

Significantly, the western powers did not act to prevent the construction of the wall or to tear it down. Yet no peace treaty had been signed after the war, and no agreement had been made canceling the four-power status of Berlin. The fact that the wall was uncontested by both superpowers marked an implicit acceptance that the status quo of a divided Germany would remain intact indefinitely. In the face of this new reality, states and organizations began to reevaluate and reform their policies with regard to the two parts of Germany. Perhaps there was no legal change, but the political reality could not be ignored. Although *de jure* recognition of the division was still to come, the acceptance of reality caused by the existence of the Berlin Wall led to *de facto* recognition of East Germany throughout the international system.

What Each Part of Germany Wanted from the Other

The two parts of Germany during the Cold War were fundamentally asymmetrical both in their natural endowments and their policy goals. East Germany had half as much land and one third as many people as did West Germany, and many of the best educated and talented emigrated to the West if they could.⁵⁰ East Germany was predominantly agricultural, and what little industry it had was dismantled and shipped to the USSR as reparations.⁵¹ Artistic and literary creativity were stifled by the Stalinist regime in East Germany, and the people had virtually no input in the government; it certainly was not the functioning democracy its leaders would have had observers believe it to be. West

⁵⁰ Harry Hansen, ed., *World Almanac and Book of Facts for 1951* (New York: New York World Telegram, 1951), 325.

⁵¹ Stern, *Ulbricht*, 109.

Germany, on the other hand, was infused with Western monies, recovered from the war and was transformed with surprising rapidity into an economically powerful, integrated member of the international community.

The two parts of Germany were also very different with regard to their views of each other. West Germany, along with its NATO allies, considered itself the only legitimate government for all of Germany, including the East.⁵² The people of the East, the West correctly observed, had not been allowed free elections, and the one-party communist rule in the East was therefore illegitimate, as was the division forced upon the German people by outside powers. West Germany wanted a unified Germany with a popularly elected government, and therefore for many years refused to engage in diplomatic relations with any nation, except the USSR, which recognized East Germany as a sovereign nation. This so-called Hallstein Doctrine, a policy of *Abgrenzung* ("demarcation" from the GDR), denied the FRG a great deal of diplomatic influence among its close neighbors and risked its relations with every other country.⁵³ Yet the West Germans felt so strongly about the need to prevent East German recognition that losing diplomatic relations with any nation sympathetic to the East German regime was a risk they were willing to take.⁵⁴

At least at first, the GDR's policy goals were similar to those of the FRG. East German leader Walter Ulbricht dreamed of a Germany united under socialism. He therefore spoke of unity as loudly as did his Western counterparts. "Every true German wants reunification. Our people cannot live without unity," Ulbricht unambiguously

⁵² Turner, *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, 38.

⁵³ Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games*, 105., Naimark, "Is It True What They're Saying About East Germany?," 554.

⁵⁴ Turner, *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, 138.

stated in 1946.⁵⁵ In contrast to the Hallstein Doctrine which pursued unity while keeping East Germany at arms length, Ulbricht also spoke of the essential brotherhood of the German people in a policy of Annäherung (“coming closer”).⁵⁶

Slowly, however, the policies of both parts of Germany began to change. As will be discussed later in more detail, the new leadership of West Germany recognized that the surest path to eventual unification was not to push East Germany away with the Hallstein Doctrine, but to bring it closer through social and economic relations. East German leaders, on the other hand, decided that distinguishing themselves from the West was the best way to gain legitimacy for their regime. “One Germany does not exist....At present, there are two German states,” said Ulbricht in 1955, in clear contrast to his 1946 comment. In essence, out of a desire to engage the East on more realistic terms instead of pretending it was not there, West Germany took up the previously Eastern policy of Annäherung. East Germany, for its part, embraced Abgrenzung, insisting that West Germany was a foreign nation.⁵⁷ As will be seen, the consequences of this change in policy were extremely significant in the story of the German question in the IOC.

What Each Part of Germany Wanted from the IOC after World War II

It appears from its actions that the IOC wanted to return to normal pre-war operations as soon as possible. The first post-war meeting of the Executive Board was held in London in August 1945 where it determined that the Games of 1948 would occur

⁵⁵ Stern, *Ulbricht*, 175.

⁵⁶ Naimark, "Is It True What They're Saying About East Germany?," 554, 56.

⁵⁷ A. James McAdams, *Germany Divided : From the Wall to Reunification*, ed. John Lewis Gaddis et al, *Princeton Studies in International History and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 74, 76.

despite the challenges posed by wartime destruction.⁵⁸ The four-year game schedule was re-instated, London was awarded the 1948 Games to compensate for the cancellation of the 1944 Games, and most of the pre-war IOC members continued their service to the movement, including President Edstrom. The IOC also appears to have thought the pre-war status quo would be maintained with regard to Germany, which would mean one NOC representing the entire nation. The IOC was hugely mistaken.

Despite the fact that National Olympic Committees were required by the IOC to be free from governmental control, the goals of the sport leaders of both parts of Germany were remarkably and probably not coincidentally in line with the foreign policies of their respective governments, leading to conflict between East and West Germany. This made the pre-war status quo impossible to maintain.

The NOC of the FRG gained the upper hand in the status quo-conscious IOC in 1951 because it was recognized as the continuation of the same NOC that had existed before the war. According to IOC rules, this recognition gave the West German NOC the sole authority to represent the entirety of Germany at the Olympic Games. The FRG therefore had the legitimacy of continuity in the Olympic Movement, as well as *de jure* (though it never translated into *de facto*) control over East German sport. The NOC of the GDR was thus left with the unenviable status of an upstart separatist challenging the status quo.

The NOC of the FRG, therefore, was completely in accord with the IOC's desire to maintain the pre-war status quo, as this coincided perfectly with its government's foreign policy goal of being recognized as the only legitimate German government. As matters stood in 1951, any East German athlete wanting to compete in the Olympic

⁵⁸ Findling and Pelle, eds., *Historical Dictionary of the Modern Olympic Movement*, 247.

Games would have had to compete under the leadership of the one and only German NOC, the West German one. “The West Germans, the stronger of the two parties in this arrangement, believed they would control the arrangement, and they welcomed the cooperation of the two teams as a step toward something more.”⁵⁹ The West German NOC had no qualms about the IOC provisionally recognizing the East German NOC—it did, after all, control sport in East Germany—as long as the athletes did not march behind a separate East German flag as a separate team. West German IOC member Karl Ritter von Halt said “...that the NOC of West Germany is not in principle opposed to the recognition of that of East Germany, but I would like to insist that the united German team is formed...”⁶⁰ The FRG was content as long as the GDR did not gain formal recognition on the world-wide Olympic stage. Willi Daume, president of the FRG’s NOC explained that the difficulties presented by the united team were necessary “in order to prevent for now that we give the possibility to the other side to make the co-existence of two German states evident before the public of the world, before that gigantic spectacle of the Olympic Games.”⁶¹

The GDR, on the other hand, was a newborn country and therefore needed any sort of legitimacy and recognition it could get. The USSR and the Eastern bloc countries shared the desire of IOC recognition for their East German comrades, and argued for it accordingly in IOC sessions.⁶²

⁵⁹ Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games*, 105.

⁶⁰ “Je dois dire que le C.O. de l’Allemagne de l’Ouest n’est pas en principe opposé à la reconnaissance de celui de l’Allemagne de l’Est, mais je voudrais insister... que l’équipe des deux Allemagnes soit formée....” Karl Ritter von Halt, IOC member from the FRG (translation by Kenneth Garrett) IOC Archives, Minutes of the June 1955 IOC session, Paris.

⁶¹ Translated quotes from an interview of Willi Daume in the “Frankfurter Allgemeine” 10 December, 1962; IOC archives, Correspondence of the GDR’s NOC for 1966.

⁶² IOC Archives, Minutes of the June 1955 IOC session, Paris.

Of course, “recognition” is a word with many shades and meanings. The IOC *recognized* the East German NOC as soon as the early 1950s, in that it corresponded with the NOC, acknowledged that it controlled East German sport, gave it “provisional” recognition, held bilateral meetings with East German NOC leaders, invited them to IOC sessions and of course allowed East German athletes to participate in the Olympic Games. The recognition the GDR wanted, however, was of a more *political* variety. The GDR wanted to display the *accoutrements* of recognition on the world stage as a symbol of the legal division of Germany.⁶³ To force the athletes of the world—especially those of the FRG—to stand at attention while the *East* German national anthem played and the *East* German flag was raised above the medal stand, with the rest of the world watching on television, would have been a coup for the GDR. While United Nations recognition would have been better, the GDR saw IOC recognition as a more easily attainable step in the right direction. “...GDR athletes could enter lands that GDR diplomats could not—“diplomats in warm-up suits” some commentators called the athletes.”⁶⁴ While not ideal, this type of “diplomatic” contact was better than none at all.

The “One Team” Solution

While the FRG desired exclusive control over German sport and the GDR desired completely separate recognition, the IOC’s solution to the German Question from 1951 until 1968 was to insist that the two sides cooperate in forming a united Olympic team. At first glance, this would appear to be a sub-optimal outcome for both sides: The West

⁶³ Document prepared concerning the “Cessation des relations sportives le 16 aout, 1961” by the German sports federations, 7; IOC Archives, Meetings between President Brundage and the two German NOCs, 1962-63, and Turner, *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, 83.

⁶⁴ Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games*, 105.

Germans were forced to acknowledge the existence of the East German NOC, and negotiate compromises with it as if it were an equal, while the East German NOC failed to gain the trappings of outright legitimacy it so badly desired. That the IOC would even suggest such a seemingly impossible arrangement is surprising. That the leaders of the two extremely hostile parts of Germany would allow their sport representatives to attempt such an arrangement at the request of the IOC seems contrary to the common assumption that states are infinitely more powerful than transnational organizations. For nation-states, legitimacy and sovereignty are, after all, not insignificant considerations to be lightly treated. That the IOC would actually succeed in implementing this idea is unbelievable, yet it happened.

Amazingly, the two sides appeared relatively amicably on the world stage for 12 years beginning in 1956. The FRG and the GDR sent the last united team to the Winter Olympic Games in Grenoble, France in 1968. They sent two teams to Mexico City, also in 1968, but these teams marched behind one flag, one banner and one anthem. It was in November of 1968, after the Mexico City Games, that the October 1965 IOC decision granting the GDR full recognition came into force, and the name “German Democratic Republic” was used in IOC materials.⁶⁵ Ironically, it was on West German soil at the 1972 Munich Games that the GDR fielded its first completely independent Olympic team.

The following chapters provide insight into what motivated the IOC to insist on such an unusual arrangement, and more significantly, what allowed this transnational organization to succeed in doing so in the intense political situation that was the Cold

⁶⁵ Guttman, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games*, 96. and Christopher R. Hill, *Olympic Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 39.

War. I also explore what motivated and necessitated a change in this policy in the second half of the 1960s, when each Germany was allowed its own fully recognized Olympic team.

CHAPTER 2

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE “ONE TEAM” SOLUTION

Understanding the IOC's Motivations

If our ultimate goal is to understand how the IOC (and by way of generalization other transnational organizations) was *able to* enforce its policy vis-à-vis nation-states, a necessary first step is to gain an understanding of why the IOC *wanted to* implement this plan in the first instance.

The discussion will proceed from an examination of IOC president Avery Brundage's personal preference for a united team to a look at why the IOC was generally biased toward the West. I will then move to a discussion of some interesting phenomena at work in the organization that contributed to the birth and longevity of the united team. These include the slow pace at which IOC decisions were made and the IOC's desire to make big decisions in the name of little ones. Finally, I will explore the results of the GDR's poor behavior vis-à-vis the IOC, the GDR's failure to follow IOC rules and a pervasive idea that the united team was a beacon of hope for the oppressed East German people.

I. Avery Brundage: Ideological Emperor of the IOC

The IOC of the 1950s was set up in such a way that the president of the organization had immense power to implement his policies or veto those of others. The character of the president is therefore extremely pertinent in evaluating how and why the organization did what it did. Avery Brundage, an American businessman and former

Olympic champion, was both ideological and stubborn. Much of IOC policy in regard to the German question can easily be traced back to this man.⁶⁶

One of Brundage's deepest held ideals was that concerning the universality of sport. He believed that every person, regardless of race, religion, gender and especially in this case nationality should be able to compete in international sport. The world of politics, in his opinion, should be completely divorced from the world of sport, and therefore athletes should not be made to suffer for the mistakes of their political leaders. Brundage saw the division of Germany as an unfortunate and temporary political problem caused by the war. He could imagine no reason why the IOC should exclude East German athletes from the Olympic Movement, except one: IOC rules allowed for only one NOC per country. Since there was already a German NOC, that revived by the West Germans in 1951 after a long war-induced hibernation, the East Germans could not have one of their own. The united team solution was, at first, merely a clever way for the IOC to circumvent its own rules in order to satisfy the ideal of universal inclusion in sport. Brundage himself explained to the sport leaders of the GDR in 1954 that "...since our regulations provide that there shall be only one National Olympic Committee in a country, I do this [create a united team] only to give to the youth of the D.D.R. [GDR], who are not responsible for the political situation, an opportunity to participate in the Olympic Games."⁶⁷ Short of either changing its own rules to fit the situation, which would have set a dangerous precedent, or recognizing the GDR as a sovereign nation,

⁶⁶ For a thorough discussion of the impact of organizational leadership on the development of an organization's policy, see Martha Finnemore, *National Interests in International Society*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein, *Cornell Studies in Political Economy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), 89-127.

⁶⁷ Letter from Avery Brundage to the NOC of the GDR, 11 September, 1954; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the GDR's NOC for 1953-54.

which would have been contrary to the IOC's stated non-political nature,⁶⁸ the idea of fielding a united German team seemed the best solution.

Shortly after the May 1951 meeting in Lausanne during which both NOCs signed an agreement to form a united team, the government of East Germany forced its NOC to repudiate the agreement because it fell short of securing complete East German legitimacy. This angered the IOC, but its leaders agreed to hold another meeting in Copenhagen to attempt to find a resolution to the problem. This time, the East German delegation did not even show up. "[The delegates from] East Germany were very impolite with the delegates of the IOC in Copenhagen, after having purely and simply repudiated their signatures that were affixed to the bottom of the convention of Lausanne."⁶⁹ This was the last straw for Avery Brundage; he was personally offended by the political machinations of the GDR government.

After this event in 1951, the German question became to Avery Brundage primarily a test of the power of sport over politics. If the East German government wanted to use the Olympic Movement to make a political statement, it would be his personal mission to make sure its efforts were foiled. He would not negotiate with the East Germans until they got rid of the sport leaders who had repudiated the Lausanne agreement and found leaders who would be willing to revisit the idea of a united team.⁷⁰ The one-team policy was now seen as ideal not because it led to universal inclusion, but because it refused to acknowledge the "internal" political problems of the German

⁶⁸ "Statement from the IOC Concerning Political Interference in Sport" sent to the World Press on 26 March, 1962 by Avery Brundage; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the GDR's NOC for 1962.

⁶⁹ "...l'Allemagne de l'Est ont été très impolis avec les délégués du C.I.O. à Copenhague, après avoir purement et simplement répudié leur signature apposée au bas de la convention de Lausanne." (translation by Kenneth Garrett)

IOC Archives, Minutes of the April 1953 IOC session, Mexico City.

⁷⁰ "Recognition of the Olympic Committee of East Germany," 48; IOC Archives, Minutes of the June 1955 IOC session, Paris.

nation.⁷¹ Going further, it consciously rejected the political action of recognizing the GDR as a sovereign nation, thereby purposely thwarting a goal of the government that dared to interfere in Brundage's kingdom of sport. "The important thing from my point of view is the formation of an all-German team, which will demonstrate to the world that where the politicians fail the sportsmen can succeed."⁷² For Brundage, this victory of sport over politics validated the Olympic ideal of being non-political, and this alone made the united team a goal worth fighting for.

It is ironic that of the three choices available to the IOC (completely excluding the GDR, accepting the GDR as a sovereign nation, or the united team concept) Brundage chose what was potentially the most politically acrimonious of the three in that it required cooperation between the leaders of diametrically opposed nations. Instead of taking a stance with one of them against the other, he took a stance *against both of them*. He evidently thought that thwarting politics was the same thing as being non-political.

Brundage really did believe in his ideals, and was stubborn once his mind was set, even in the face of persuasive opposition. The most convincing argument raised on behalf of the GDR as early as May 1951 was that the IOC had given the Saar region of Germany its own NOC in 1950 at the request of France, and the Saar continued to have its own NOC until 1957 when it rejoined West Germany.⁷³ Although the IOC insisted the two situations were entirely different on the basis that international law recognized the Saar as being neither a part of France nor Germany at that time, it is obvious that the

⁷¹ IOC Archives, Minutes of the July 1952 IOC session, Helsinki.

⁷² Letter from Avery Brundage to Karl Ritter von Halt, 28 May, 1955; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the FRG's NOC for 1951-52.

⁷³ Espy, *The Politics of the Olympic Games*, 34. Minutes of the May 1951 Executive Board meeting, Lausanne.

two issues were perfectly analogous; the IOC had allowed two German territories their own NOC's (the FRG and the Saar), yet refused a third.⁷⁴

Similarly, the IOC accepted two Chinese NOCs (mainland and Taiwan) and refused to acknowledge the similarity to the German question. The IOC's main argument for why the Chinese situation was different was that China was still technically at war and so could not cooperate on one team.

Regardless of the IOC's reasons, the one country-one NOC rule had been shown to be flexible if the IOC had the will to change it. But Brundage was stubborn in defending the IOC's prerogatives, even when they were inconsistent or even blatantly hypocritical.⁷⁵ "It would appear the IOC action was not motivated by its charter and by noble principles but by political expediency, using the charter when it supported IOC action and conveniently neglecting it when it was contrary to the IOC's purpose."⁷⁶ The fact that the one-team idea became a personal crusade for Avery Brundage goes a long way toward explaining why the IOC kept pushing for it long after the political situation that created the necessity had changed. "I don't propose to give it up without a struggle," explained Brundage in 1963.⁷⁷

II. The Pro-Western Tendencies of the IOC

Contrary to countless accusations by communist countries during the Cold War, the IOC was not a pawn of American imperialists. The IOC's actions did not correspond

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Guttmann, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games*, 78.

⁷⁶ Espy, *The Politics of the Olympic Games*.

⁷⁷ Letter from Avery Brundage to Albert Mayer, 19 January, 1963; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the FRG's NOC for 1963.

closely enough to NATO policies to warrant this accusation.⁷⁸ In fact, the IOC on several occasions throughout the Cold War acted contrary to American wishes. For example, the IOC's consideration of a two-China policy in the 1950s brought condemnation from the highest levels of the US government, as did the choice of Moscow as the host of the 1980 Olympic Games.⁷⁹ However, despite its institutional independence from the Western powers, many of the members of the IOC had personal sympathies toward the West. The composition of the IOC's membership was originally largely western European, and it makes sense that an organization with self-selected membership would continue to show a bias toward the original founders 50 years later, as the original members probably would not have chosen new members unsympathetic to their own views.

More specifically with regard to the German question, the general mood in the international community was largely pro-FRG. West Germans were quick to acknowledge the crimes of the Nazi regime, and were willing to do what it took to become fully accepted members of the brotherhood of nations.⁸⁰ Led by American strategists, most countries were willing to accept and embrace West German goodwill remarkably quickly.⁸¹

The IOC's pro-western bent manifested itself in clear preferential treatment of the FRG over the GDR throughout the era in question. There are examples of correspondence between Avery Brundage, IOC Chancellor Otto Mayer and West German NOC leaders Karl Von Halt and Willi Daume as if they were conspiring against the GDR. For example Mayer, in a letter addressed casually to "Karl" and signed "with kind

⁷⁸ J.K. Sowden, *The German Question 1945-1973* (London: Bradford University Press, 1975), 259.

⁷⁹ Espy, *The Politics of the Olympic Games*, 6.

⁸⁰ Minutes of the August 1950 IOC Executive Board meeting, Lausanne, and *Ibid.*, 32.

⁸¹ Turner, *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, 116.

regards” informed him that Mayer was going to have a meeting with the East German NOC leader, and that “I want to be very prudent with him and the few words I tell him...I don’t believe in those people.” He then asked that “if there is anything special will you inform me...,” showing that he was willing to believe any information the West Germans offered as evidence against the untrustworthy East Germans, and offering the West Germans a chance to prepare their best ammunition to catch the East Germans off guard.⁸² In a letter from Daume to Brundage, Daume begs that “our contacts with you in this matter [conspiring to thwart the GDR’s desire to display its own flag] must naturally be dealt with utmost discretion (sic). Not a single word should pass outside and in particular not to the press for this would place us in an awkward position as everyone would say that the IOC acts under pressure of the West German Government.”⁸³ The accusation by the USSR that the IOC was influenced by political sympathies and that their words did not correspond to their actions was entirely justified.⁸⁴ The most obvious outcome of this preferential disposition was the IOC’s quick and favorable response to the request of the western allies to recognize the FRG’s NOC, as opposed to the decade of reluctance to recognize the GDR, despite the pleas of the Eastern bloc.⁸⁵

III. The Slow Pace of IOC Decision Making, both Inherent and Strategic

During the years in question, the IOC usually met once a year, and for only about three days each time. The exceptions were Olympic years, when the IOC also met in the

⁸² Letter from Otto Mayer to Karl Ritter von Halt, 7 August, 1953; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the FRG’s NOC for 1951-52.

⁸³ Letter from Willi Daume to Avery Brundage, 27 November, 1959; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the FRG’s NOC for 1951-52.

⁸⁴ “Proposal from Mr. Andrianov, Vice-president of the IOC”, Annex II to the Minutes of the May 1967 IOC session, Tehran.

⁸⁵ IOC Archives, Minutes of the June 1955 IOC session, Paris.

few days before the start of each Games. With such a sparse meeting schedule, the agenda was necessarily limited to what the president deemed urgent. Having already understood that Avery Brundage had personal antipathy toward the GDR's NOC, and was ideologically attached to the idea of a united German team, it is not hard to imagine that he used his organization's slowness to his greatest advantage. Simply stalling was far easier than actually addressing the arguments presented by the GDR, and the IOC used this method for over a decade.⁸⁶ In other words, the IOC was able to delay the discussion of GDR recognition for so many years partly because the opportunity for discussion only arose once a year. For example, even after the IOC had agreed to recognition of the GDR's NOC in 1965, it found loopholes that enabled it to insist on a common flag and anthem through 1968, and even tried to stall after 1968.⁸⁷

There is evidence that the IOC explicitly recognized stalling as a valuable strategy to sustain its policy. After the Berlin Wall went up in 1961, the FRG's NOC, recognizing that the logical IOC reaction to this event would be eventual GDR recognition, begged the IOC to continue to stall.⁸⁸ Its members believed that if the IOC could delay the discussion until after the initial political storm had passed, the FRG could ensure a united team for the 1964 Games. "We must, above all, come through this difficult year. Next year conditions will have changed importantly. It would be the best, not to treat the German problem at all nor to take it up in the agenda....We only need time. Then we will be able again in 1964 to give example showing what the Olympic movement is able

⁸⁶ Letter from the GDR's NOC to the IOC, 31 March, 1953; Avery Brundage Collection, Reel 72, Box 129, and IOC Archives, Minutes of the June 1961 IOC Executive Board meeting, Athens.

⁸⁷ Letter from Heinz Schöbel to Avery Brundage, 11 October, 1968; Avery Brundage Collection, Reel 72, Box 129.

⁸⁸ Letter from Willi Daume to Avery Brundage, 10 November, 1961; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the FRG's NOC for 1962.

to bring about.”⁸⁹ The IOC was able to overcome the initial firestorm, deciding to wait until something actually *forced* a change in the policy. What is most amazing about this policy is that the original agreement was for the GDR to gain recognition after sending a united team to Melbourne in 1956.⁹⁰ It had not agreed to united teams indefinitely, but Brundage wanted it to continue until reunification, and the slow pace of IOC decision making enabled it to stall long enough to allow for 12 years of united teams.

IV. Making Big Decisions in the Name of Little Ones

Another explanation for the IOC’s embrace of the united team idea was the tendency of many IOC members to make big decisions in the name of little ones. In keeping with IOC founder Coubertin’s original concept, the IOC could not and would not acknowledge the influential role it had come to occupy in the international system, and the fact that sport and politics were inextricably intertwined.

Specifically, the IOC would not acknowledge that it had the ability to grant or refuse a great deal of legitimacy to a nation state, the GDR. “Politics do not enter into the Olympics...,” Brundage told a newspaper in 1959.⁹¹ The IOC had in its possession ample evidence, mostly from the media, that people did indeed attribute a political importance to IOC decisions. For example, an article covering the IOC session of 1965, during which the IOC decided to recognize the GDR’s NOC, said, “It [the IOC] has repeated a thousand and one times, that the International Olympic Committee is removed from every political influence. Nevertheless, I am sure that its decisions are moved by

⁸⁹ Letter from Willi Daume to Avery Brundage, 15 February, 1962; IOC Archives, Meetings between President Brundage and the two German NOCs, 1962-63.

⁹⁰ IOC Archives, Minutes of the June 1955 IOC session, Paris.

⁹¹ Article from the *Santa Barbara News-Press*, 13 December, 1959; Avery Brundage Collection, Reel 72, Box 129.

political interests. Today they have put on the table, nothing more and nothing less, than the question of whether there are two Germanys.”⁹² Yet the members of the IOC never admitted this is what they were considering at the 1965 Session. They made the decision to recognize East Germany, but talked mostly of NATO visa policy, as if that were the real question at hand, and as if the world was not going to consider recognition of the GDR’s NOC to be of political significance.⁹³ Despite evidence of how different were the opinions being spread to the general public regarding the political nature of IOC decisions from those expressed by the IOC itself, Brundage still insisted as late as 1967 that “The IOC has nothing to do with countries. We recognize National Olympic Committees which, naturally, does not imply any governmental recognition.”⁹⁴ Brundage and the other IOC members apparently preferred to focus on technicalities, hiding behind their limited jurisdiction and ignoring the political weight carried by their decisions.⁹⁵ It was easy to continue to insist on the united team, pretending it was merely a way to circumvent IOC rules, and that it had no larger political significance.

The first use of this method of denying reality in the German case was the insistence on a strict observation of the one country-one NOC rule. Even though the IOC had bent this rule on other occasions, most importantly when it allowed the Saar to have its own team, it could now hide behind the rule to avoid an action that would obviously amount to recognition of a new, controversial nation-state. Even after the IOC had

⁹² “Se ha dicho y se ha repetido una y mil veces, que el Comité Olímpico Internacional está lejos de toda influencia política. Sin embargo, yo estoy seguro que sus decisiones están movidas por los intereses políticos. Se ha puesto hoy sobre la mesa, nada más y nada menos, que la cuestión de las dos Alemanias.” (translation by Kenneth Garrett)

Article from the newspaper *Region*, of Oviedo, Spain, 8 October, 1965 by Ricardo Vazquez-Prada; IOC Archives, Press Articles for the October 1965 IOC session, Madrid.

⁹³ IOC Archives, Minutes of the October 1965 IOC session, Madrid.

⁹⁴ Letter from Avery Brundage to Heinrich “Henry” B. Strack, 13 October, 1967; Avery Brundage Collection, Reel 71, Box 128.

⁹⁵ Espy, *The Politics of the Olympic Games*, 38.

provisionally accepted a separate NOC, it insisted that this was not the same as accepting a second Germany.⁹⁶ The IOC proceeded to focus on minor technicalities like flags, anthems, uniforms and emblems, refusing to admit that these decisions had political repercussions attributed to them by the world media and presumably by the media's readership as well.

It is impossible that the IOC was unaware of the political significance attached to some of its decisions, given the articles the IOC possessed indicating as much. Whether the GDR marched behind the East German flag in a ceremony televised world-wide was clearly a very important matter in international politics. It is *possible* that the IOC members were truly naïve. It is also *possible* that all references to such political considerations in the IOC decision making process have mysteriously disappeared from the record. But it is far more likely that not talking about the political considerations was a psychological tool used to deny the truth. It is the omission in this case that speaks the loudest; not once in an IOC general session did the members agree that allowing the GDR to use its own flag amounted to political recognition of a separate nation, even though they must have known through the media that some in the international community considered it as such. I argue that the IOC felt less responsible for the political repercussions of its decisions if it refused to openly discuss them. At the same time, the IOC was able to convince itself that it was not denying the GDR an important foreign policy goal; unless the GDR wanted to admit that its desire for a separate flag had a political rather than sporting reason (which it could not do by IOC rules) it had to

⁹⁶ Interview of IOC Chancellor Otto Mayer, 19 March, 1962; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the FRG's NOC for 1962.

pretend in IOC discussions that such a political consideration was not important.⁹⁷ After all, it was supposedly only a minor technicality in the world of the IOC, where cooperation and sportsmanship were the highest ideals.

Denial of jurisdiction and the applicability of precedent were common examples in the IOC of making big decisions in the name of little ones. Though the IOC was often careful of its rights as the head of international sport, it sometimes hoped to let subordinate units take the blame for deciding difficult questions. In 1952, the IOC hoped that the Helsinki Olympic Games Organizing Committee (OCOG) would take the heat for inviting or not inviting both Chinese teams, a problem very similar to that of the two Germans. Similarly, the IOC hoped the International Federations would decide whether to recognize both Chinas independently.⁹⁸ Ironically, this is exactly what happened in the German case, though much later. The IFs acted first to recognize East Germany, and the IOC, feeling its supremacy threatened, was forced to “play catch-up.”

In the same vein of denial, the IOC refused to believe that the precedent of recognizing both mainland China and Taiwan separately had any bearing on the German question. “This decision should not be interpreted as a precedent, because it is about an exceptional decision.”⁹⁹ They also denied the applicability of the decisions taken with regard to Bohemia and Finland, both of which had their own NOCs while they were still parts of other sovereign nations.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Letter from Otto Mayer to the NOC of the GDR, 8 July, 1964; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the GDR's NOC for 1963-71.

⁹⁸ IOC Archives, Minutes of the July 1952 IOC session, Helsinki.

⁹⁹ “Cette décision ne doit pas être interprétée comme étant un précédent, car il s’agit d’une décision exceptionnelle.” (translation by Kenneth Garrett)

ibid

¹⁰⁰ ibid

V. IOC Anger at GDR Actions

In 1951, the GDR leaders had yet to acquire the finesse requisite for successful diplomacy. The GDR was a communist dictatorship, and more specifically, a Stalinist one. The leaders were accustomed to getting their way and, because of the shunning of the western powers, had little experience with accepted methods of diplomacy. They did not know how to play by the IOC's rules, and therefore did great harm to their cause.

After the leaders of the GDR's NOC rudely cancelled its agreement to field a united German team, the IOC was willing to give the GDR another chance by arranging a second meeting in Copenhagen later that year. The IOC's president and its chancellor both went out of their way to be in Copenhagen, and were waiting in the hotel with the West German delegation when the appointed time came. Even though the GDR's NOC members were in the city and calls had been placed to their hotel, they failed to appear at the meeting. The IOC delegates and the West Germans left after a few hours. The GDR representatives claimed their absence was due to a circuitous train trip and miscommunication, but the IOC members took it as a confirmation of the poor manners displayed after the last meeting, and became antipathetic to the East German cause in the IOC.¹⁰¹

From that point on it was not only Avery Brundage, but most members of the IOC who began to either treat the GDR badly or sympathize with those who did. The advances made at the Lausanne meeting in 1951 were considered null; the GDR had to start from scratch in the recognition process.¹⁰² IOC Chancellor Mayer "accidentally

¹⁰¹ Letter from Kurt Edel to Avery Brundage, 10 February, 1952; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the GDR's NOC for 1951-52.

¹⁰² Letter from Avery Brundage to Kurt Edel, 30 March, 1953; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the FRG's NOC for 1951-52.

forgot” to place a matter of importance to the GDR on an agenda, despite having promised them he would do so. As Brundage explained to the full IOC in 1953, “On August 22, 1952, under the presidency of Mr. Edstrom, the chancellor wrote to the NOC of East Germany that its request would be carried on the agenda of the [IOC] Session of Mexico City. The contents of this letter have escaped the memory of the chancellor, who omitted to carry this question on the agenda of this Session.”¹⁰³ When GDR issues did come up for debate, Brundage would take the floor first and remind the IOC of the bad manners showed by the GDR, swinging opinion against them before the debate even began.¹⁰⁴ Brundage was often rude and condescending when replying to GDR correspondence,¹⁰⁵ making it seem as though he considered the GDR a part of the FRG, which was of course humiliating and infuriating for the GDR.¹⁰⁶ Even after the GDR won recognition, it still did not receive the equal rights promised to it. For example, Heinz Schöbel, president of the GDR’s NOC, even had to remind the IOC in 1968 of its 1965 decision to grant recognition, as some in the IOC would have undoubtedly preferred to forget it.¹⁰⁷ Even if the IOC might otherwise have been willing to consider GDR recognition earlier than it did, the GDR’s poor handling of IOC sensitivities and the long memory of the IOC rendered this impossible, and kept the notion of a united team alive partly as a punishment for the GDR.

¹⁰³ “En date du 22 août 1952, sous la présidence de Mr. Edstrom, le chancelier a écrit au C.O. de l’Allemagne de l’Est que sa requête serait portée à l’ordre du jour de la Session de Mexico. Le contenu de cette lettre a échappé à la mémoire du chancelier, qui a omis de porter cette question à l’ordre du jour de la présente Session.” (translation by Kenneth Garrett)

IOC Archives, Minutes of the April 1953 IOC session, Mexico City.

¹⁰⁴ IOC Archives, Minutes of the May 1954 IOC session, Athens.

¹⁰⁵ Cablegram from Avery Brundage to Kurt Edel, 25 March, 1953; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the GDR’s NOC for 1951-52.

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Avery Brundage to Heinz Schöbel, 21 March, 1956; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the GDR’s NOC for 1955-56.

¹⁰⁷ Letter from Heinz Schöbel to Avery Brundage, 11 October, 1968; Avery Brundage Collection, Reel 72, Box 129.

VI. The GDR Broke IOC Rules

Although the IOC did not need additional excuses to deny the GDR recognition, the GDR provided significant ones: the East German sport authorities repeatedly broke at least three of the IOC's most fundamental rules. Most egregious was payment of large sums of money for athletic excellence. The IOC was extremely strict about amateurism, and these payments angered the IOC members. Most offended was Avery Brundage, as amateurism was an essential component of his vision of the Olympic Spirit.¹⁰⁸ The payments were reported in East German newspapers, which made the accusations extremely difficult to deny. Also abhorrent was the apparently sanctioned use of performance-enhancing drugs at least as early as 1960, but probably much earlier. The GDR's goal was to win, and its sport leaders apparently were willing to do whatever it took to achieve that goal. Both offenses were documented by notarized testimony of defecting athletes.¹⁰⁹

Also important, but more difficult to prove, was the political control of the GDR's NOC. This was particularly important in the East German case because it was the obvious political interference after the Lausanne agreement in 1951 that angered the IOC in the first instance. Countless times, political statements made by supposed sport leaders would appear in East German newspapers, clippings of which would be forwarded to the IOC by West German sport leaders. Brundage and others would then confront the GDR's NOC on these issues, with the implication that unless these offenses stopped,

¹⁰⁸ Otto Schantz, "The Presidency of Avery Brundage (1952-1972)," in *The International Olympic Committee - One Hundred Years: The Idea - the Presidents - the Achievements* (Lausanne: International Olympic Committee, 1994), 87.

¹⁰⁹ Translation of the notarized testimony of former East German Olympian Hans-Joachim Neuling, 16 October, 1962; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the GDR's NOC for 1962.

recognition of the GDR would never come.¹¹⁰ As a result, it was always difficult for the GDR to make demands of the IOC, as the IOC could simply refer to the GDR's infractions.

VII. The United Team is Better for the German People

A final, very persuasive but obviously politically motivated argument in the IOC, raised most often by the West German NOC, private East German citizens and the media was that a united German Olympic team was the last hope of reunification for the oppressed people of East Germany. The IOC, the argument went, should realize how incomparably evil the East German government is, and do everything it can to prevent it from claiming any independence from the freedom and democracy in the West.¹¹¹ Proponents of this view recognized that the IOC had been able to force cooperation between East and West, and this gave hope to the people of the East. Brundage himself seemed very attached to the idea that the Olympic Movement could perform a great service to the people of East Germany; there is a bull's-eye drawn on a newspaper clipping in his private files which reads, "The forces which created this sports bond might be studied for a clue to the solution of the political problem which has divided the German nation ever since the end of World War II."¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Letter from Avery Brundage to Heinz Schöbel, 7 December, 1959; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the FRG's NOC for 1951-52.

¹¹¹ "Cinco Minutos Duró La Discussion Del Tema De Las Dos Alemanias," *Alerta*, October 9 1965; IOC Archives, 1964 Press Articles for the Oct 1965 IOC session, Madrid.

¹¹² Avery Brundage Collection, Reel 72, Box 129.

How the IOC was able to Implement its Policy

Having demonstrated what the IOC wanted to accomplish and why, a full understanding of the development of the one-team policy requires an investigation into how the IOC was able to achieve its goal. In an era of superpower dominance and extreme political sensitivity, how was this transnational organization able to implement such a politically significant policy?

Of primary importance to the IOC's ability to implement its policy was the existence of a "policy void" after World War II in the two parts of Germany and in their superpower patrons. With rhetoric in favor of its policy and no strong contravention against it, the IOC's united team policy was born and flourished.

I. The IOC Capitalized on a Rare Policy Climate in Germany

The haphazard division of Germany by the victorious World War II allies led to a policy void in the two parts of Germany which would require years to fill. Each side had goals with respect to the other which it would have preferred over the IOC's policy: the West Germans knew they wanted to be reunited with their Eastern brothers, and the East Germans knew they wanted the legitimacy of a sovereign nation. Yet neither side was able to develop a workable course of action, or policy, to implement its goal. The IOC was able to fill the void by promoting a policy that seemingly moved each side closer to their hitherto incompatible goals.

The motivations of the FRG with regard to the united team were not difficult to understand. Separate East German NOC recognition would have been detrimental to the Bonn government's ability to claim that it was the only legitimate German

government.¹¹³ The FRG understood that recognition by a transnational organization would be a significant form of legitimacy for the GDR. It was therefore in the best interest of the FRG to support the one-team policy in order to keep the GDR out of the international spotlight. The one-team policy of the IOC was simply a convenient way for the FRG to reinforce its governmental policies.¹¹⁴

The GDR, on the other hand, was a young nation and was forced to admit that it did not then enjoy complete policy freedom. Small, young nations are simply weaker in respect to external pressures than are large, established countries.¹¹⁵ The GDR had to pursue its goals incrementally, and at least initially, could not afford to stand firm against the larger players. As we have seen, the GDR tried to resist IOC decisions in 1951, insisting it would not come to the 1952 Helsinki Games without full recognition.¹¹⁶ The IOC refused this ultimatum, and the GDR was forced back to the negotiating table, having learned lessons in humility, patience, strategy and the importance of at least feigned cooperation.

With respect to legitimacy, the GDR understood that the attainment of legal recognition by significant organizations, let alone states, was going to be difficult. The first incremental step was to simply win a degree of *social* recognition from the international community. Consistent with this mindset, the one-team policy was simply a means to a greater end as “one of the few arenas of international participation open to

¹¹³ "El C.O.I. Aprobó El Ingreso De Alemania Oriental," *Linea*, October 9 1965; IOC Archives, 1964 Press Articles for the Oct 1965 IOC session, Madrid.

¹¹⁴ Letter from Karl Ritter von Halt to Avery Brundage, 14 July, 1957; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the FRG's NOC for 1951-52.

¹¹⁵ IOC Archives, Minutes of the November 1956 IOC Executive Board meeting, Melbourne.

¹¹⁶ "Communiqué de la IIème Assemblée Extraordinaire des Membres du Comité National Olympique de la République Démocratique Allemande;" IOC Archives, Correspondence of the GDR's NOC for 1951-52.

it.”¹¹⁷ Attending the Olympic Games, even under the aegis of a united German team, was better than not attending at all. It was certainly better than letting the FRG attend alone as “Germany,” thereby making a statement that the GDR did not exist.¹¹⁸

It was the fact that *de jure* diplomatic recognition for the GDR did not then exist that made appearance in the Olympic Games so important. It was a chance for the country to establish itself as a victor on the international stage and win respect from the people of the world at a time when respect was not forthcoming from world governments. Between 1972 and 1988, the GDR was able to send its “diplomats in warm-up suits” to places where GDR officials were prohibited, and was thereby able to make unspoken statements about East German success in many forums.¹¹⁹

While it is true that cooperating with a united team might at first appear to be a step backwards in the fight for sovereignty, the GDR must have had faith that slowly working its way into the Olympic Movement through cooperation with the united team would eventually lead to full recognition, which would make the temporary sacrifice worthwhile. The GDR must have realized that the IOC was the most important leader in the world of sport, and that if the GDR wanted recognition, it simply had to defer to the IOC by temporarily binding itself to the united team concept.¹²⁰

Any step toward full IOC recognition, therefore, was to the advantage of the GDR. The “provisional” recognition of the GDR’s NOC offered in 1955 at least allowed it to showcase its best athletes in international competition. While it continued to argue

¹¹⁷ Henry Krisch, *The German Democratic Republic: The Search for Identity, Westview Profiles: Nations of Contemporary Eastern Europe* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 168.

¹¹⁸ Letter from Heinz Schöbel to the members of the IOC, 6 June, 1964; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the GDR’s NOC for 1963-71.

¹¹⁹ Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games*, 105.

¹²⁰ Guttman, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games*.

for full recognition, it realized that its mere presence at the Olympic Games offered a form of legitimacy in itself. A statement similar to what I suspect was likely the view of East German sport leaders was made by the Rhodesians when they too were denied full IOC recognition after having recently won independence from Great Britain. When asked to march behind an Olympic flag, they said “we are ready to participate under any flag, be it the flag of the Boy Scouts or a Moscow flag. But everyone knows very well that we are Rhodesians and will always remain Rhodesians.”¹²¹ While full recognition would have been optimal for the East Germans, being allowed to participate under any flag was a step in the right direction.

Aside from the international political prize attainable only through cooperation with the IOC’s united team policy, East Germany’s head of state, Walter Ulbricht, also saw domestic benefits to participation in international sport competitions, even if as part of a united team. Ulbricht was a sport fanatic; his inspiration likely came from the Communist and Socialist movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which had “a lively tradition of workers’ sports activities.” These movements held the view that sport keeps the population fit and provides a source of inexpensive entertainment for the population as spectators and participants. Furthermore, champions are role models for the young and a basis for national pride. Despite severe economic difficulties, the GDR devoted huge amounts of resources to all levels of its sport program immediately after the country was born. The regime had built 122 sports stadiums, 1,122 large indoor field houses and 47 indoor swimming pools by 1952.¹²² Without cooperating with the IOC, the GDR would not have been able to field athletes at

¹²¹ Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games*, 148.

¹²² Krisch, *The German Democratic Republic*, 165.

international competitions, and the GDR's sport machine would have been largely invisible in the international arena. Without international competition, many of the domestic benefits of this intense sport program would have been unavailable. The GDR therefore agreed to the IOC's united team policy both for international and domestic political reasons.

From the available evidence it appears the IOC never intended to be a leader in the realm of foreign policy. The one-team policy was innovative, and the IOC members seemingly took delight in thwarting the GDR's attempts to bring politics to sport, but IOC leaders apparently never considered the policy to be radical or completely antithetical to the most important long-term national goals of one of the parties involved. As in any situation, the IOC was forced to act with the best information available. That information indicated that, although the GDR might have been fighting for sovereignty in the short term, the ultimate goal of both sides was reunification.¹²³ The IOC was therefore able to successfully promote what we now consider to be a radical policy because the political leaders were still using rhetoric indicating they would favor a plan to bring about unification, even if only in the arena of sport. The IOC policy seems surprising to us now because we now know that the political leaders had settled on division and the rhetoric was empty.

In hindsight it is easy to wonder why the IOC failed to see in 1948 that there were going to be two Germanys. But faulting historical figures for not knowing what we now know is simply bad historical methodology. To understand the IOC's actions, we must understand the information it had available. To the IOC of the 1950s, it appeared there was still considerable support for German reunification, at least in both parts of Germany.

¹²³ Turner, *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, 64, 118, 23.

Though it is now questionable whether they then wanted reunification, both the FRG's Adenauer and the GDR's Ulbricht repeatedly *said* they did. The leaders of both NOCs also admitted that there was only one German state.¹²⁴ The three western allies also continued to express their desire for reunification and democratization of Germany into the early 1950s, when the united team was designed.¹²⁵

Furthermore, lack of contrary action was highly significant in this situation. The Basic Law of the FRG continued to call for reunification as a primary policy goal throughout the era in question. The GDR for its part did not fully close its borders to emigration until 1961. The four occupying powers failed to make an agreement on the formal status of Berlin until 1971, and even then many argued that such an agreement would preclude the reunification most still expected.¹²⁶ It seemed to the IOC at the time that all signs were pointing toward reunification.

With political and NOC leaders of the countries in question and the Cold War superpowers expressing or implying a preference for German unification, despite possible hidden preferences to the contrary and isolated instances when the GDR implied dissatisfaction, the IOC seemed perfectly justified in pursuing a policy toward that end.

II. The IOC Capitalized on the Rare Policy Climate of the Early Cold War

The Cold War policy void extended much farther than the two Germanys. The superpowers slowed their rhetoric favoring unification, but their lack of concerted effort to interfere with the IOC policy throughout the era in question was significant to the

¹²⁴ IOC Archives, Minutes of the June 1955 IOC session, Paris.

¹²⁵ Turner, *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, 123.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 153-4, 56.

IOC's adoption and continuation of the one team policy. Neither power ever brought to bear its full influence to discourage the IOC's united team policy.

The victorious allies after World War II were preoccupied with issues more pressing than the German question, and never actually worked out a German settlement. The superpowers were therefore not willing to actively oppose any IOC policies regarding Germany, as they had no alternate plans of their own. They preferred to minimize contention to the greatest extent possible so as not to unnecessarily exacerbate their potentially fatal animosity. In fact, far from opposing the IOC plan, the USSR tried to negotiate for a neutral, unified Germany as late as 1955.¹²⁷ The US did have a policy of not officially recognizing East Germany, and the USSR had a policy of trying to win rights for East Germany as one of its satellites without upsetting the US.¹²⁸ But the IOC policy did not really thwart either of these plans, so it met with barely a notice, let alone opposition. Had the US anticipated that the GDR would eventually use its pseudo-recognition to obtain full recognition, and use that to gain a television platform to attempt to show the world the superiority of the communist system, it might have sooner opposed the IOC. But, as noted, historical figures cannot be expected to have had more information than was then available. As it was, the IOC was able to implement a radical policy with unforeseen, significant consequences in the international system due to the significant ambiguity extant in that system.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 126.

¹²⁸ McAdams, *Germany Divided*, 61.

CHAPTER 3

THE DISSOLUTION OF THE UNITED TEAM

After a failed attempt to negotiate the particulars of a united team for the 1952 Olympic Games, the two parts of Germany appeared as a united team in 1956, 1960, 1964 and 1968. It was at its Madrid Session in October 1965, that the IOC finally made the decision to fully recognize the NOC of East Germany. To understand why this change occurred, we must analyze both why the IOC said it changed its policy, and why the IOC was forced by external circumstances to do so. At the intersection of the two there lies a larger truth about the way transnational organizations operate in the international system.

Understanding the IOC's Internal Motivations

Historical explanations of past events are never simple. There are a large number of factors that inform the decisions of actors, some in ways more obvious than others. Complicating matters further, the actors themselves often fail to leave sufficient evidence as to what motivated them. Yet to understand what finally motivated the IOC to change its policy, it is imperative to attempt to examine the evidence that does exist.

Primary among the factors compelling a change in IOC policy was the GDR's final refusal to cooperate any longer with the united team policy. Also weighing in favor of the dissolution of the united team were various legal arguments, the IOC's recognition that the GDR had fulfilled its obligations to the IOC, the fact that the International

Federations threatened the IOC's supremacy by acting first in the German question, and a continued down-playing of the significance of IOC decisions.

I. The GDR Refused to Cooperate

Foremost among the reasons stated by the IOC as motivating its decision to end the united team was that the NOC of the GDR simply announced at the Tokyo Games of 1964 that it would no longer cooperate with the one-team policy.¹²⁹ The IOC had earlier indicated to the GDR that the IOC did not have the ability to force the GDR to continue to participate as a united team, and the GDR simply acknowledged that this was true.¹³⁰ Full IOC recognition came as promptly as possible, at the next IOC session in Madrid in October, 1965.¹³¹

Of course, the GDR had made a similar threat of non-cooperation in 1951, but to no avail. In fact, far from leading to the desired outcome, the GDR's belligerent stance in 1951 made the IOC leaders angry, and turned the IOC against the GDR for over a decade. Because Avery Brundage's influence over the organization was pervasive both in 1951 and 1965, the change in IOC policy cannot be attributed to a change in leadership. Something else changed in the intervening decade that enabled the GDR to meet with success the second time it forcefully demanded recognition. Analysis of changes largely

¹²⁹ IOC Archives, Minutes of the October 1964 IOC session, Tokyo, and IOC Archives, Minutes of the October 1965 IOC session, Madrid, Annex 2.

¹³⁰ Letter from Heinz Schöbel to Avery Brundage, 23 June, 1965; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the GDR's NOC for 1966.

¹³¹ The two Germanies appeared as a united team again at Grenoble in 1968, and also shared the same banner, flag and anthem in Mexico City in 1968. The reader will notice that this was *after* the GDR had won full recognition in 1965. This was primarily because the Winter Olympic Games that year were being held in Grenoble, France, a NATO country. NATO visa policy prohibited East German passports, so the final "united team" appeared in 1968 simply to circumvent this visa policy. Espy, *The Politics of the Olympic Games*, 77-8.

external to the IOC and their influence on the IOC will best help us to understand the role of transnational organizations in the international system.

II. Legal Arguments

Although the FRG's NOC commissioned experts in international law to argue the merits of its case for the continued existence of a united team,¹³² the members of the IOC were apparently persuaded by the legal arguments that favored the GDR's position. One such argument was that the conditions under which the united team agreement had been decided were fundamentally changed. The explicitly stated condition for the existence of the united team had been that it would last until reunification, when one team would again exist under normal circumstances. It could also be argued that the opposite condition—that the team would last until the two nations were clearly *not* going to reunite, a condition that arguably existed after 1961—was also implicit. But in any event, the agreement was based on the premise of *one* Germany, separated by uncontrollable circumstances, trying to re-unite as soon as possible. Once this condition no longer existed, the agreement was no longer valid.

A more positive argument based on IOC rules was articulated in 1962 by British IOC Vice-President Lord Exeter, and was vociferously asserted by the GDR. The rule in question states that the IOC allows for NOCs to exist for "territories" in which that NOC controls sport. It was also stated that the IOC "deals on a factual basis according as to

¹³² Letter from Willi Daume to Avery Brundage, 30 September, 1965; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the FRG's NOC for 1965-69, and "Comment on the Legal Opinion concerning 'The All-German Olympic Team as a question of law' by Professor Dr. Karl Zemanek; IOC Archives, Meetings between the German NOCs and President Brundage, 1962-63.

who administers Olympic sport in the area.”¹³³ Lord Exeter supported the argument that if Taiwan and North Korea were allowed separate NOCs as “territories,” the GDR should also have a fully recognized NOC to reflect its control of East German sport.¹³⁴ The IOC was again making big decisions in the name of little ones. This was not a new rule or a new interpretation of it, but it was now being utilized as a screen for a more significant political decision.¹³⁵ What changed was that the GDR now had undisputable and indefinite control over sport in its “territory,” for reasons to be subsequently explained.

III. The GDR had Fulfilled its Obligations to the IOC

After its severe misstep in 1951, during which it learned how to deal with the IOC, the GDR’s NOC was a model of what the IOC wanted the NOCs to be. Excepting a few surprisingly minor disputes over details of the united teams such as the choice of anthem, the GDR caused very few problems for the IOC. It continued to form united teams, ceased to spout blatantly political rhetoric in sporting contexts, and turned the other cheek when the IOC treated it unfairly. More significantly, in the process of working with the East German NOC leaders over the course of a decade, the members of the IOC seemed to warm to the East German sport leaders. The animosity created by the GDR’s mistakes in 1951 had been forgiven and, as far as the records show, forgotten. In fact, the GDR had even come to appear to embrace the one team idea, taking the high ground when the FRG broke off sporting relations with the GDR in 1961.¹³⁶ The GDR’s

¹³³ IOC Archives, Minutes of the February 1960 IOC session, San Francisco.

¹³⁴ Letter from Lord Burghley to Neal Ascherson published in *The Observer*, London on 25 April, 1965; Avery Brundage Collection, Reel 72, Box 129.

¹³⁵ Letter from Willi Daume to Avery Brundage, 30 September, 1965; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the FRG’s NOC for 1965-69.

¹³⁶ Letter from Heinz Schöbel to Avery Brundage, 21 August, 1961; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the GDR’s NOC for 1961.

stance was of course motivated by the political considerations discussed earlier, but the IOC was pleased to be getting its way, whatever the GDR's motives. In short, the IOC no longer *wanted* to deny the GDR's bid for recognition as it had in the 1950s because it appreciated the GDR's cooperation. It was much more open to the GDR's arguments in the 1960s. In fact, only five members voted against GDR recognition in 1965, showing that recognition of the GDR had become a popular idea in the IOC.¹³⁷

IV. The International Federations Threatened the Supremacy of the IOC

The world of international sport was a complex web of jurisdictions and prerogatives during the time in question, and still is. The IOC was at the top, but precariously so. It was certainly not isolated or sovereign. When other international sport bodies acted in concert, by design or by coincidence, the combined power of this change in the organizational field was enough to threaten the ability of the IOC to lead the sport movement. Such an event occurred in the first half of the 1960s regarding the German question.¹³⁸ The NOC of the GDR had been making the same arguments to the International Federations as it had been to the IOC, hoping for recognition and the ability to field separate East German teams at World Championships. As the International Federations had lower international profiles than the IOC, had few if any precedents on this issue, and were likely not explicitly founded on the principle of being non-political, it was easier for them to show flexibility and accept the reality of the division of Germany by reflecting that political fact in their membership rosters.¹³⁹ In short, there was simply

¹³⁷ IOC Archives, Minutes of the October 1965 IOC session, Madrid.

¹³⁸ Hill, *Olympic Politics*, 39.

¹³⁹ Letter from Heinz Schöbel to Avery Brundage, 23 June, 1965; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the GDR's NOC for 1966.

not as much baggage accompanying decisions of a political nature in the International Federations as there was in the IOC.

As the International Federations began to accept the arguments of the GDR and grant them recognition, the IOC felt intense pressure to act.¹⁴⁰ Judging by its actions in the Chinese question, the IOC had probably initially hoped the IFs would take the first action regarding East Germany in order to wash its hands of the sticky political implications of the decision. When this actually happened 10 years later, the IOC felt it was losing the ability to lead the sport movement. To set a precedent of the IOC taking a backseat role to the IFs in matters of great importance was unacceptable to the IOC. The IOC therefore waited for the most opportune moment, such that the writing on the wall clearly stated that the world sport community would accept the recognition of East Germany, but such that the IOC could still claim to have been at the vanguard of the change in policy.

V. Continued Playing Down of the Significance of IOC Decisions

Despite over a decade of political wrangling in the IOC, angry missives from governmental foreign offices and countless newspaper stories to the contrary, the IOC continued to insist that it was not making an important decision regarding the legitimacy of a separate East German nation.¹⁴¹ To make the decision more palatable, the *GDR* even announced that recognition of its NOC was not to be construed as state recognition.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ IOC Archives, Minutes of the October 1965 IOC Session, Madrid, and "2 équipes allemandes aux J.O." Avery Brundage Collection, Reel 72, Box 129.

¹⁴¹ Ricardo Vazquez-Prada, "El Comité Olímpico Internacional Ha Reconocido a Alemania Del Este," *Region*, October 9 1965.

¹⁴² "L'Allemagne de l'Est devant la porte d'entrée" by Gaston Meyer, 29 December, 1964; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the GDR's NOC for 1963-71.

Because the IOC does not purport to recognize states, they would have argued, no decision it takes should be construed as doing so. To drive this point home, the IOC continued to refer to the GDR as the “territory” of East Germany even after it received full recognition in 1965.¹⁴³

External Forces Influencing the IOC’s Decision to Abandon the United Team

“In August 1961 a curtain was drawn aside to reveal an empty stage. To put it more bluntly, we lost certain illusions that had outlived the hopes underlying them—illusions that clung to something which no longer existed in fact.”

~Willy Brandt, Mayor of Berlin 1957-66, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany 1969-74¹⁴⁴

As we have seen, the internal decision making processes of the IOC were, over time, affected by important changes in external forces. Hard as the IOC might have tried to remain non-political, in fact transnational organizations cannot entirely escape from the world around them. The IOC was in a unique position in the 1950s and early 1960s, when a policy void allowed it to act in the vacuum and greatly influence the international system. The significant external change that occurred was the maturation of the Cold War in Germany. Major players in the German question not only settled on policies that were contrary to the IOC’s one-team policy, but they were finally willing to fight for their policies and had the power to get their way. The seminal event that shocked the Cold War world into accepting political realities was the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961

Acceptance of political realities is a process, and it therefore took time to sort out the implications of the wall. But it was only after August 1961 that it became clear that

¹⁴³ Hill, *Olympic Politics*, 39.

¹⁴⁴ McAdams, *Germany Divided*.

Germany would remain divided for the foreseeable future. This change in political realities had consequences for the IOC, including a deterioration of its bargaining position vis-à-vis the GDR, increased danger of repercussions for spurning the GDR and the death of the ideal that sustained the united team in the IOC. These changes ultimately brought about the dissolution of the united team.

I. Deterioration of the IOC's Bargaining Position vis-à-vis the GDR

In its early years, the government of the GDR was inexperienced and relatively weak. It did not have the blessing of its own people or those of most of the nations of the world. In its early quest for legitimacy, the GDR was willing to make concessions that most nations would refuse, such as a second-class status in the international sport movement. As time went on and the GDR government gained in power and recognition, the balance of power began to shift away from the IOC. Many political scientists succumb to the irresistible urge to make blanket statements about nations being "more powerful" than transnational organizations. But the relationship between the GDR and the IOC provides an excellent example of the more complicated relationship that often exists between states and other actors in the international system. The level of power each has depends entirely on the situation.

One major factor that caused this shift was the fact that the GDR's *de facto* existence was slowly becoming *de jure*; the GDR gained power as others ceded it to the GDR. Since the time the IOC had first begun discussing the one-team idea, the USSR had officially ended its occupation of the GDR, and had welcomed it into the Warsaw

Pact. The GDR had begun exchanging diplomats with 13 countries by 1965, and engaged in trade with both the first and third worlds.¹⁴⁵

None of these small changes were sufficient, however, to shatter the IOC's illusion that reunification was still possible; that change came with the Berlin Wall, "the last step in the consolidation of the status quo" in Europe.¹⁴⁶ Although the wall was not a *de jure* agreement in the sense of a treaty, the fact that neither the US nor the USSR took any steps to stop its construction had the effect of a treaty without actually signing one.¹⁴⁷ The wall did not settle the legal situation, *per se*, but it redefined the situation much more in accord with political reality. Once the superpowers accepted the Berlin Wall, a formal agreement on the divided status of Germany would have been redundant.¹⁴⁸ Chairman of the East German Council of State Walter Ulbricht triumphantly proclaimed on August 25, 1961, that "Herr Adenauer has determined with sadness that his revanchist German policy has collapsed at the Brandenburg Gate. The great wheel of history cannot be turned back. Herr Adenauer has had to accept the fact that the GDR is here to stay."¹⁴⁹ There was a certain reluctance on the part of the German *people* to accept the division, but there was really no choice after the wall.¹⁵⁰ Even Chancellor Adenauer had tried to accept it by 1963, confirming Ulbricht's 1961 statement.¹⁵¹

The GDR had called the world's bluff, so to speak, and won. It gambled that the world would accept the audacious action of imprisoning its own people and, surprisingly, had been correct. There were more pressing Cold War concerns at that time, and the

¹⁴⁵ Krisch, *The German Democratic Republic*, 55, 65, 68.

¹⁴⁶ McAdams, *Germany Divided*, 52.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁴⁸ Turner, *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, 89, 92.,
McAdams, *Germany Divided*.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 57, 58.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 64-68.

superpowers were not willing to fight over Germany.¹⁵² Having won the major political victory of building the Berlin Wall, calling the IOC's bluff was far easier. The GDR stepped up its demands for recognition and legitimacy within the Olympic Movement, culminating finally in the refusal to participate as one team after 1964.¹⁵³ The GDR knew that, given the existence of the Berlin Wall, there was now little if any hope of reunification, and that the IOC's policies would have to begin to face that fact.

Fittingly, it was the IOC that then began to make uncharacteristic concessions to the GDR. After years of meekness and deference to Brundage, President Heinz Schöbel of the East German NOC rebuffed Brundage's pleas to continue the united team, and turned Brundage's own catch-phrase around on him in 1965, saying "under the present political conditions in Germany [the impossibility of reunification due to the Berlin Wall] it would be a victory of sport over politics, if independent teams would compete in the Olympic Games." He went on to remind Brundage of his statement that "there can't be a combined German Olympic team without the consent of the two German NOCs" and that the IOC could not demand a "compulsory marriage," implying that if it tried to, it would fail. No matter how ideological and idealistic the IOC's policy was, there came a point when even Avery Brundage could no longer deny political reality; East Germany was finally in a position to tell him so.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁵³ Letter from Heinz Schöbel to Avery Brundage, 23 June, 1965; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the GDR's NOC for 1966.

¹⁵⁴ Letter from Heinz Schöbel to Avery Brundage, 23 June, 1965. IOC Archives, Correspondence of the GDR's NOC for 1966.

II. A Dangerous Political Game

Having discovered that it could no longer rationally deny the GDR's political autonomy, the IOC also realized that even if it could do so, it probably should not. When the united team concept was devised in direct, intentional contradiction to the wishes of the GDR government, the IOC had been a venerable, universally supported organization, while the GDR was thought to be an accidental, temporary remnant of a sloppy post-war settlement. The power balance was clearly initially in favor of the IOC. But by the early 1960s, and especially after 1961, the GDR was a formidable force, at least in the Eastern bloc. The Cold War lines had matured such that continuing to blatantly spurn one of the most powerful Eastern bloc countries might have had unacceptable repercussions for the IOC. The GDR finally had enough political clout to perhaps lead a successful eastern boycott of the Olympic Movement. A boycott itself would have been bad enough, but the concessions the IOC subsequently might have been forced to make to the boycotters might have been even worse because of the precedent it would set. Continuing to fight for a now illogical ideal was not worth risking the survival or autonomy of the entire Olympic Movement.

III. Ostpolitik: Political Détente

Even if the logic behind the united team had still held and the IOC could have continued the policy without risking animosity from the Eastern bloc, in the 1960s the general world consensus came to be that animosity toward the GDR was no longer helpful. The new mood, both spoken and unspoken, favored social recognition and

engagement.¹⁵⁵ Largely because of the existence of the Berlin Wall, the world was ready to accept political reality and build policy from there, rather than from a fantasy of imminent reunification.

The leaders of the FRG, particularly Konrad Adenauer, were the slowest to embrace this new mood. But in the final Cold War analysis, the opinion of Adenauer was insignificant compared to those of the leaders of the United States; the FRG found itself out of step with its allies, and eventually had to change its views.¹⁵⁶ Adenauer even tried to go behind the back of his US allies to get what he wanted from the Soviets, but his efforts were in vain.¹⁵⁷ Hopes for reunification were finally dead after the wall went up; there was simply no longer a point in fighting for an unrealistic goal. In 1963 and 1964, the FRG began to establish relations with the Eastern bloc countries.¹⁵⁸

General Charles DeGaulle, President of France in this period, was extremely influential in developing this new stance toward the GDR, especially in 1965 when the IOC finally recognized the GDR. Although he, like the rest of the West, drew the line short of formal recognition, he thought more could be done toward peace and rapprochement by positively engaging the GDR and trying to bring it into the fold of civilized, law-abiding nations.¹⁵⁹ Continuing to treat the GDR as a rogue nation would only create a self-fulfilling prophecy. If it continued to fail to face the facts, the world was in danger of losing any hope of positive resolution to the German problem. One

¹⁵⁵ J.K.A. Thomanek, *Dividing and Uniting Germany*, ed. Eric J. Evans and Ruth Henig, *The Making of the Contemporary World* (London: Routledge, 2001), 43.

¹⁵⁶ McAdams, *Germany Divided*.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Sowden, *The German Question 1945-1973*, 265.

should simply call a spade a spade, and develop a solution from that position of honesty.¹⁶⁰

The Berlin Wall also served to bring about a degree of acceptance in the GDR itself. The people did not embrace their tyrannical government, and if anything abhorred the construction of the wall and the “psychological scar manifested in depression, resignation and helplessness.”¹⁶¹ But they too realized that there was now no escape. The GDR was there to stay, and they might as well make the best of a bad situation.¹⁶²

The IOC, because it operates in the same arena as do states, was naturally aware of and influenced by this change in attitude caused by the Berlin Wall.¹⁶³ There is evidence that even Avery Brundage, the greatest proponent of the united team and a strong force in the IOC throughout the period in question, had unwillingly accepted the inevitability of its demise as early as 1962. There was actually a formal decision taken at Lausanne on December 8, 1962 to recommend two teams. The decision was later annulled in the hope that a united team could survive, but the GDR realized then that its recognition was forthcoming.¹⁶⁴ Given that organizational leadership is such an extremely important component of decision making and that Avery Brundage was such a strong leader during both the creation and the demise of the united team, a change in policy despite his unwaveringly strong preference for its continuation points to a very strong change in the external circumstances surrounding the organization and its leadership: the construction of the Berlin Wall.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 277.

¹⁶¹ Naimark, "Is It True What They're Saying About East Germany?," 569.

¹⁶² Sowden, *The German Question 1945-1973*, 277.

¹⁶³ IOC Archives, Minutes of the October 1965 IOC session, Madrid.

¹⁶⁴ Minutes of the Meeting between President Brundage and the two German NOCs held at Lausanne Palace Hotel, 6 February, 1963; IOC Archives, Meetings between the two German NOCs and President Brundage, 1962-63.

As the West Germans were understandably more reluctant than most to accept the finality of the division signaled by the construction of the Berlin Wall, they hoped that simply clinging to the old IOC policy might somehow hold the two sides together, and therefore wanted to delay IOC recognition of the GDR's NOC. Avery Brundage was happy to oblige; he simply delayed the decision until 1965 by making full use of the IOC's slowness and by hiding behind smaller decisions.¹⁶⁵ The GDR held true to its word and reluctantly participated in the final fully united German team in 1964, knowing that the IOC would soon grant it recognition. Though the political watershed that led to the ultimate end of the policy came in 1961, the IOC's hand was not actually forced until 1964 when the GDR was finally willing to *act* on the new political reality. The GDR probably could have demanded its recognition as early as 1961 because of growing political *détente*, but because it did not, the previously agreed upon united team went ahead as planned.

IV. Ostpolitik: Social *Détente*

The concept of *détente* extended from the political into the social, cultural and sporting spheres as well. While DeGaulle and other political leaders hoped that positive engagement with the GDR might lead to political harmony, many believed that social recognition was better for the *people* of the GDR as well. Whereas the IOC had devised the united team under the assumption that recognition of the autonomy of East German sport would diminish the feeling of brotherhood between East and West German people,

¹⁶⁵ Letter from Willi Daume to Avery Brundage, 15 February, 1962; IOC Archives, Meetings between the two German NOCs and President Brundage, 1962-63, and Letter from Avery Brundage to von Halt and Daume, 18 December, 1962; IOC Archives, Meetings between the two German NOCs and President Brundage, 1962-63.

the new thought was that if the two sides could only learn to cooperate on *equal* terms after recognizing the reality of their division, true harmony would ensue. The longer the West isolated the GDR, the more different the two Germanys would become culturally. If that happened, communism would not fall in the East, but instead the Stalinist elements would become further entrenched when left alone. It was suggested that development of more cultural ties as soon as possible would help solve the problem. But improved relations had to be the first step, and *de facto*, social recognition was necessary to improve relations.¹⁶⁶ With increasingly civil relations, the people of the East would not forget that life was better on the other side, and would hopefully not lose hope.¹⁶⁷

The IOC acknowledged the efficacy of the concept of social *détente*, and put it into practice. The dissolution of the united team and the acceptance and positive engagement of the East German sport organizations, including the NOC, was an example of the type of social recognition that was expected to ameliorate the tensions between East and West.

This strategy worked. Recognition of the GDR improved the FRG's relations with the entire Eastern bloc. As expected, the people of the GDR realized how truly superior was the quality of life in the West. Also important, the GDR had problems defining its identity after Ostpolitik took hold. The FRG could no longer be thought of as a great evil behemoth trying to destroy communism; it was a friendly neighbor, offering financial aid and other assistance.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Sowden, *The German Question 1945-1973*, 267, 72.

¹⁶⁷ Turner, *Germany from Partition to Reunification*, 132.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 163, 95, 216.

V. Death of the Ideal

With the IOC's political fantasies shattered, the *ideal* that the united team was the best thing for sport and for the athletes would have been the only reason for it to sustain the policy. When that too was shattered, the IOC simply had no good reason or excuse to fight for a losing proposition.

Greatly influential to the realization that the ideal was dead were the opinions of the athletes of the FRG and the GDR. As early as 1959 but especially after 1961, the united team created more hardship and animosity than it did goodwill. The athletes were subjected to an extra round of grueling qualification competitions to determine who made the united team. Not only did this put the German team at a disadvantage compared to the other nations who did not have this extra burden, but it created a ferocious sense of competition and even hatred within the ranks of the united German team.¹⁶⁹ The IOC had envisioned a situation where the united team would provide a forum for understanding and cooperation, and it appears from the opinions of the athletes that the result had been exactly the opposite. Exacerbating the animosity was the fact that for a period immediately after the construction of the wall, FRG athletes were threatened with imprisonment for competing with or against the athletes of the GDR.¹⁷⁰ Even after this restriction was lifted in order to allow for another united team in 1964, the damage was done; there were simply too many bad feelings associated with the united team concept. The athletes of both sides expressed to the IOC that they would get along better if they were able to compete normally, as members of two separate teams. The Berlin Wall had

¹⁶⁹ Letter from Heinz Schöbel to the members of the IOC, including letters from various East and West German athletes, 1965; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the GDR's NOC for 1966.

¹⁷⁰ Letter from Heinz Schöbel to the members of the IOC, 6 June, 1964; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the GDR's NOC for 1963-71.

come to sport, too, and the IOC was merely perpetuating a farce and a fiction by denying it.¹⁷¹

The athletes argued to the IOC that the true victory of sport over politics would be two separate teams. Forcing the two sides together was only fueling the fire of political hatred, rather than quenching it. The building of the wall had made relations so tense and bitter that amity between the athletes was simply impossible.

The IOC saw the trend toward the recognition of reality after 1961 and rode the wave of change. While there were internal forces at work in the IOC, the external political changes brought about by the Berlin Wall-induced *détente* were what convinced the IOC to depart from the one-team policy. Most of the internal changes in the IOC are in fact attributable to the same general change in attitude reflected in *détente*. The IOC found its policies to be in opposition to the prevailing mood of the international community, and it found that the GDR was finally willing and able to oppose IOC policy. The construction of the Berlin Wall, a policy of morally dubious quality, turned out to be exactly what was needed to normalize the Cold War in Germany and win the GDR a degree of recognition and legitimacy it had been unable to obtain in the previous 15 years. This is essentially a story of the Cold War eventually permeating an originally untouched organization and acting through it. The IOC lost its policy-making liberty to the realities of the Cold War.

¹⁷¹ Letter from Heinz Schöbel to the members of the IOC, including letters from various East and West German athletes, 1965; IOC Archives, Correspondence of the GDR's NOC for 1966.

CONCLUSION

As the problem of a divided Germany began to unfold in the 1950s, the IOC found itself with a great deal of power to influence the relationships among the actors. For various reasons such as Avery Brundage's ideals, the force of his personality, the slow pace of the IOC decision making process and the lack of sophistication of the leaders of the GDR's NOC, the leadership of the IOC was able to promote the concept of a united German Olympic team as a solution to what many perceived as the unnatural, temporary division of Germany. Though the two *governments* were at odds and were unwilling to officially negotiate, the IOC was able to implement its policy throughout the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s. The IOC's power in this situation stemmed from its ability and willingness to fill a policy void left by the confusion and ambiguity of the early Cold War. Both parts of Germany, as well as the superpowers behind them, had vague notions of the ideal solution to the German problem, but each attempt at resolution ended in failure and increased animosity. The IOC had a solution that was, for various reasons, attractive to both parties, and due to the policy void, no one was willing to aggressively promote an alternative. In hindsight it appears the IOC's policy was out of step with political reality, but it was all that existed.

The division of Germany was not settled *de jure* until 1989-1990, when the two sides formally reunified. Yet the *de facto* ambiguity of the Cold War situation in Germany ended with the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. In the absence of a legal agreement, the wall was an undeniable symbol of the *de facto* division. It took a few years for political and sport leaders throughout the world to realize the full implications of the wall, yet most people knew in August 1961 that a watershed event had

occurred. As world opinion regarding East Germany changed over the next few years, policies gradually followed.

In summary, the IOC went from playing a largely autonomous role affecting the development of the German question to doing little more than reacting to changes in the political arena. The official ideology of the Olympic Movement did not change between 1952 and 1965. Being non-political, universally inclusive and a catalyst of international goodwill still had the highest priority in the IOC in 1965. Furthermore, its forceful leader, Avery Brundage, was still strongly in favor of the united team, which rules out a change in leadership as an explanation for a change in IOC policy. Something external to the IOC forced it to change its policy: twenty years of Cold War history. As what appeared to be a sloppy mistake after World War II became a recognized and accepted part of international reality, the IOC changed accordingly. The united team policy was originally intended by the IOC as a way to avoid making a political decision on the sovereignty of East Germany. As events developed, the IOC's united team policy gradually became an anachronistic statement that was in fact more political than the original political statement it was designed to avoid.

The construction of the Berlin Wall, while itself a culmination of a variety of political developments, served as the ultimate catalyst for a move to recognize reality inside and outside the IOC and to develop policies accordingly. It was in this general mood of détente that the IOC finally softened its policy. But the IOC did not abandon its policy immediately after 1961. Though even more out of step with political realities than before, the IOC hung onto the policy as a favor to the West Germans. The policy finally ended when in 1964 the GDR, emboldened by the existence of the Berlin Wall and the

stability it afforded the regime, simply told the IOC it would no longer cooperate. The simultaneous existence of i) a competing policy, ii) an actor sufficiently impassioned to push for the alternate policy and iii) a change in external circumstances that rendered the actor sufficiently powerful to force the IOC's hand deprived the IOC of its power in the German question.

The "Success" of the United Team Policy

It would be incorrect to attribute too much power to the IOC in connection with the German question after World War II. Although he intended the statement to be somewhat "tongue in cheek," well-respected Olympic historian Alan Guttmann was correct in stating, "When full German unification finally came in 1990, it occurred without the assistance of the International Olympic Committee."¹⁷² It would extend the argument too far to suggest that the united Olympic team brought the two nations back together in 1990. Apposite to all transnational organizations is the observation that "the IOC has few thunderbolts to command obedience."¹⁷³ The IOC never could have "commanded" the two parts of Germany to do anything; they always had the right to refuse and face those consequences.

To speak of the "success" of the IOC's policy would be to offer a normative judgment, which is often not helpful in historical analysis. In each situation, some benefit more than others, and the accuracy of the judgment would depend on one's perspective. But viewing the situation from the IOC's point of view, relative to the

¹⁷² Guttmann, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games*, 96.

¹⁷³ Nafziger, "International Sports Law: A Replay of Characteristics and Trends," 491

counterfactual situation of the non-existence of the policy, one can conclude that the policy was effective.

Germany was split by the post-war settlement, and because of the development of Cold War animosities between the superpowers, was arguably on a trajectory toward a permanent division. It is true that in 1990, the IOC had nothing to do with the reunification. And granted, there were certainly other actors in the world promoting German peace and cooperation alongside the IOC. It was not that the IOC was the only one to construct such a plan. But the situation was different between 1952 and 1968 than it likely would have been without the IOC's policy. High level sportsmen in both nations were in constant contact with one another, whereas government officials were prohibited from interacting. East and West German athletes competed side by side against *common* opponents on a regular basis, whereas East and West German citizens could only wave to one another over a giant concrete wall. East and West German sport fans were rooting for a common German team, feeling pride in their common German heritage.

Perhaps most importantly, the people of East Germany were able to hold onto a sliver of hope that they would one day be able to reunite with their families as the sportsmen were able to reunite with their teammates. One elderly woman from the GDR wrote to Brundage, saying, "This [IOC recognition of the GDR] would mean death for the re-unification, a nullification of the last hope for the people of the Zone to be liberated from their prison and concentration camp"¹⁷⁴ An athlete from the FRG wrote that "the last bridge between East and West Germany would be demolished" if the

¹⁷⁴ Letter from an un-named East German woman to Avery Brundage and Mr. Onesti; Avery Brundage Collection, Reel 71, Box 128.

GDR's NOC was recognized.¹⁷⁵ As long as the governments could agree on a common flag and anthem, and were willing to appear together on international television, the German people could hope that "last bridge" still existed and that the division was not as irreparable as it seemed.

Whether one focuses on the remarkable fact that both East and West Germany were willing to cooperate on matters of sovereignty and legitimacy within the IOC, or that the peoples of East and West Germany were able to unite in a common dream into the 1960s, it is a fact that the IOC had a positive effect on the international system that, given Cold War politics, could not have been expected in the absence of the IOC. Neither the superpowers nor the German governments nor the United Nations achieved anything similar. "We have obtained in the field of sport what politicians have failed to achieve so far," said Avery Brundage in reference to the united German team.¹⁷⁶ During the 1950s and early 1960s the IOC moved East and West Germany closer, not officially as occurred in 1990, but closer nonetheless.

The Role of Transnational Organizations in the International System

Having examined the role of the IOC in connection with the history of the united German Olympic team, including the IOC's motivations for implementing, upholding and later canceling it, as well as the external forces that led to each of these policies, a theory about the role of transnational organizations as actors in the international system emerges.

¹⁷⁵ Letter from Friedrich Schlegel to Avery Brundage; Avery Brundage Collection, Reel 71, Box 128.

¹⁷⁶ Espy, *The Politics of the Olympic Games*, 43.

A legitimate, highly respected transnational organization such as the IOC can successfully implement its own goals vis-à-vis nation states, thereby influencing the international system, unless:

- a) another actor, either state or non-state, has an alternate policy *and*
- b) that actor has a stronger bargaining position than the transnational organization *and*
- c) that actor is willing to actively pursue the alternate policy.

East Germany had the beginnings of an alternate policy in 1951 in that it wanted sovereignty and separateness, not a united German team. Condition (a) was therefore satisfied in 1951, and it continued to exist throughout the period in question as the GDR continued to want separate recognition of its NOC. Condition (c) was also met when the GDR cancelled the original Lausanne agreement concerning the united team in 1951. It refused to cooperate with the IOC's policy, and demanded a policy more in line with its own wishes.

But the bargaining position of the GDR in 1951 was weaker than that of the IOC. The IOC had something the GDR needed- international legitimacy—and that gave the IOC power over the GDR throughout the 1950s. Condition (b) of the theory was therefore not met, and the IOC was able to successfully implement its goals with respect to the united team.

One would assume that such a tense Cold War issue would have been closely controlled by the superpowers, and it could have been. The “actor” in the theory need not be a direct party to the conflict (i.e. East or West Germany). The superpowers could have

satisfied condition (b), and the USSR eventually came to satisfy condition (a) in supporting the GDR's quest for recognition of its NOC. But neither superpower was willing to promote an alternate policy, and therefore there existed a policy void because they had more important issues with which to concern themselves. The superpowers never elected to satisfy condition (c). As long as all three conditions failed to be satisfied, the IOC, a respected, legitimate transnational organization, was able to fill the vacuum and implement its policy. This was the case throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s.

The catalyst for a change in the IOC's policy was the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Why, then, did the IOC's policy not change immediately? It is true that condition (b) was finally satisfied by the GDR in 1961. The GDR gained a great deal of legitimacy by building the wall; there began gradual recognition that the GDR was there to stay. It was in August of 1961 that the IOC lost its bargaining position vis-à-vis the GDR, because the IOC no longer held the keys to the GDR's *de facto* legitimacy. The GDR was perceived as legitimate in its own right without the sanction of the IOC.

All three conditions, however, need to be satisfied for the transnational organization to lose its ability to implement its own policies. Conditions (a) and (b) were met in 1961, as the GDR had never changed its alternate policy goal; it still wanted separate recognition. But condition (c) was no longer met. Perhaps because it had been rebuffed so many times or perhaps because it took a few years to realize the implications of the wall, the GDR failed to actively pursue its alternate policy until 1964. The GDR and the other members of the Eastern bloc asked the IOC to recognize the GDR throughout the period in question, but no actor ever *actively pursued* a change in the

policy.¹⁷⁷ The conditions were in place for it to achieve its goal in 1961, but it did not *act* until the Tokyo Session of the IOC in 1964, when it refused to continue cooperating. It was only then that all three conditions were satisfied, and it was only then that the IOC was forced to change its policy.

Theoretical Support

My analysis agrees in large part with that of Samuel P. Huntington. When analyzing the interaction between transnational organizations and states, he cites as important “the alternatives open to each side to secure what it wishes through arrangements with another organization or another government.”¹⁷⁸ This concept does a great deal to explain why the GDR had a weaker bargaining position than the IOC, despite realist definitions of “power.” Recognition by the IOC is not normally or intrinsically a coveted national policy goal. If East Germany could have been recognized by West Germany and the United Nations in 1950, it would have cared little about IOC recognition. And, of course, the IOC would have immediately recognized the GDR, as it does every other legitimate state. With the Cold War situation as it was, however, IOC recognition, even provisional, was the best East Germany could hope to attain. It strove for that because it had no other alternatives.

Another element of Huntington’s analysis that is corroborated by my findings is the idea that “only organizations that are disinterested in sovereignty can transcend it.”¹⁷⁹ The IOC was intentionally designed to avoid the need to gain consensus between the

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁷⁸ Huntington, “Transnational Organizations in World Politics,” 355.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*: 368.

foreign policies of the national governments of the world. That is why the members of the IOC are self-selected, rather than nominated by the governments of the countries from which they come. Had the IOC been made up of governmental representatives, the united team policy would never have been possible. Each vote would have been completely decided by partisan Cold War politics, and therefore could never have ignored and rejected political realities the way the one team policy did.

The IOC claimed to be disinterested in sovereignty, but in this situation, some level of influence over sovereignty is what gave it its power. The principal reason East Germany was so willing to comply with IOC policies was that it wanted to strengthen a sense of national identity and sovereignty. It is of course ironic that this goal is totally contradictory to the ideals of the IOC. Whether it knew it or not, the IOC was able to manipulate the very nationalistic feelings that it purports to abhor. This is a perfect example of loose coupling between policy and practice, which enables organizations such as the IOC flexibility. It is the combination of being officially disinterested in sovereignty, but using the powerful force of nationalism as a tool, that gave the IOC its power. The IOC was not constrained by the limitations that come with internationalism (such as needing the consensus of national governments), but was able to manipulate the emotions that states have invested in sovereignty to achieve its goals.

International relations theorist David P. Forsythe also adds support for my thesis when he says, "Red Cross activity in conflicts both conserves the authority of states and promotes humane changes in their policies."¹⁸⁰ What Forsythe is explaining is that international relations are not a zero-sum game. The fact that a transnational

¹⁸⁰ David P. Forsythe, "The Red Cross as Transnational Movement: Conserving and Changing the Nation-State System," *International Organization* 30, no. 4 (1976): 608.

organization, such as the Red Cross or the IOC, has power in a situation does not mean that the power of states is necessarily being undermined. His argument, in fact, is the opposite. It is true that the Red Cross has been able to bring about changes in national policies. But by seeking permission to cross national boundaries and carry out the work that ends up changing national policies, the Red Cross actually reaffirms the ultimate power of the state. The state could refuse admission, and could also refuse to change its policies. It is only by appealing to state power that the Red Cross is able to change the international system.

Similarly, John Meyer describes a process of “reciprocal legitimation” between nations and organizations. Neither nation states nor organizations are autonomous or self-defining entities. “Nation states claim their sovereignty in terms of general and universalistic rules.” Organizations help define the “universalistic rules” by which nation states define themselves. For Meyer, the entire international system is a cultural construction, within which nation states and organizations give each other legitimacy.¹⁸¹

By recognizing *national* Olympic committees, the IOC reaffirms the ultimate importance of the state as an actor in the international system in a way very similar to that described by Forsythe. Granted, the IOC is sometimes able to encourage states to change certain policies in order to gain recognition, as in the East German case. But ultimately, it is the *state* that the IOC is recognizing, and it is up to the state whether to accept the conditions set forth by the IOC. For example, a politician *could* physically coerce voters into electing him. But by doing so, he is recognizing the ultimate authority of the voter to elect him or not, and is strengthening the idea behind the election system; voter turnout is

¹⁸¹ John W. Meyer, "The Changing Cultural Content of the Nation-State: A World Society Perspective," in *State/Culture: State/Formation after the Cultural Turn*, ed. George Steinmetz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 126.

high when voters are coerced. The voter *could* refuse and face the consequences, just as the GDR could have refused the one-team policy and been left out of the Olympic Movement. The hypothetical politician would not be elected in this case, and nobody would get what they wanted. In most cases, the politician knows exactly how much pressure he can apply before the voters refuse. Similarly, the IOC made full use of its bargaining power over the GDR, but went no further. The GDR was subtly pressured into doing something it would have preferred not to do, but when the IOC reached the limits of its ability to influence, it changed positions. In the end, even as it constrained a state, the IOC affirmed the power of states in the international system.

Areas for Further Study

The explanation for the role of the IOC presented here is the best one given the historical situation presented, but could be refined, augmented or disproved with further study. The most obvious place to continue an examination of this topic would be other situations in which the IOC was asked to legitimize new nation states born from the dissolution of previously existing nation-states. The cases of China and Taiwan and North and South Korea would be particularly enlightening, as they involved many of the same issues as presented in the case of East and West Germany.¹⁸² All three situations developed in the late 1940s or early 1950s, holding the variables of IOC personnel and outside political influences relatively constant. They were all hotspots for Cold War conflict between the superpowers, holding the variables of IOC favoritism for the West over the East constant. Also interesting might be a study of the admission to the IOC of

¹⁸² Espy, *The Politics of the Olympic Games*, 37, 83.

the recently de-colonized states of Africa in the 1960s, or the former Soviet republics in the early 1990s. Studying how the IOC developed the policies it did in each of these situations would likely shed further light on how transnational organizations act in the international system.

If one wanted to study the IOC as an international actor in areas other than state recognition, one could investigate the host-city selection process, the IOC's role in the end of apartheid in sport, the boycott crises of 1980 and 1984, the Olympics as a target of terrorism, or the IOC corruption scandal of the late 1990s. Also, questions of economics lately have become most important in the Olympic Movement, and may be a fruitful avenue for study.¹⁸³

To broaden the study of sport-related transnational organizations, one might look at the International Federations, the committees that organize continental championships such as the Pan-Pacific Games, or those that organize non-IOC-initiated events such as the Goodwill Games, and how these various organizations behave as actors in the international system.

To broaden the study of transnational organizations, one might re-evaluate previous work done on the International Red Cross,¹⁸⁴ the Catholic Church,¹⁸⁵ or international NGOs such as Green Peace.¹⁸⁶ A timely but difficult study might involve transnational terrorist organizations and their ability to influence the international system.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 61.

¹⁸⁴ Forsythe, "The Red Cross as Transnational Movement."

¹⁸⁵ Ivan Vallier, "The Roman Catholic Church: A Transnational Actor," *International Organization* 25, no. 3 (1971).

¹⁸⁶ Paul Wapner, "Politics Beyond the State: Environmental Activism and World Civic Politics," *World Politics* 47, no. 3 (1995).

The study of transnational organizations continues to be important to a complete understanding of the international system. As has been shown, they are able to influence states and other organizations, and those interactions must not be ignored by scholars. The better we can understand exactly how the intricacies of the international system work, the more we will be able to inform the decisions of international actors in a way that best improves the human condition. Transnational organizations are an increasingly important piece of the puzzle, and only continued scholarly investigation and analysis will enable us to understand the full extent of their importance.

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