

Defiance to Acceptance: The Canadian Association and the 1980 Boycott*

By John Petrella



The emblem of the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow.

The Cold War era, from the immediate Second World War aftermath until the dismemberment of the USSR in 1991, was characterised by political tensions between Eastern and Western bloc nations.¹ During the Cold War, countries aligned themselves with the world's preeminent superpowers, the USSR and USA respectively, and thus found themselves within the Soviet-dominated Eastern political bloc or the American-led Western political bloc or unaligned. Both Eastern and Western blocs strove to gain global supremacy over their rival bloc so as to attract non-aligned – mainly third world – nations which would strengthen their bloc's position.² Canada, a Western bloc nation, was a 'middle power' during the Cold War which meant it had a degree of influence within the Western bloc but still ultimately found itself at the behest of their American neighbours.³

The political tensions between these rival blocs manifested themselves prominently in political proxy battles where ideological warfare was waged between the Communist East and the Capitalist West. One of the most fertile settings for these quasi-political battles waged was international sport. The Olympics-elevated status in global sports created a breeding ground ripe for political and ideological warfare under the guise of sporting competition.⁴ Though the Soviets and the Americans have been most prominently examined in their use of the Olympic Games as a political medium to convey a positive image to the rest of the world, other nations, including Canada, desired to exploit the Olympics for political reasons as well. As a result of this desire, the Canadian Government began to be more involved in supporting and promoting sport at home through funding initiatives and government-designated task forces established to seek the best ways to improve Canadian athletic performances.⁵

The 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow presented a definitive example of the impacts of Cold War political considerations on the Olympic Games. Citing the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the USA began a boycott movement, eventually supported by many Western nations, which culminated in 60 countries declining to participate in the 1980 Games.⁶ Examination of Canadian Olympic Association (COA) correspondence in the James Worrall Papers at the International Center for Olympic Studies (ICOS) at Western University

from December 1979 (the beginning of the boycott movement) to the start of the Moscow Games provides a portrait of the COA's stance towards the boycott as the movement evolved from thought to reality. As Canada's National Olympic Committee (NOC), the COA was responsible for organising Canadian athletes' participation in the Olympic Games, and according to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) must be free from government interference. Studying the COA during this time period provides insights into this case example how the intersection of politics and international sport during the Cold War was negotiated.

The 1980 Games were to be hosted in Moscow

The late 1970s were characterised by a steady deterioration of Soviet-American relations.⁷ The swelling sea of discontent between the USA and the USSR came to a head in 1979. The Soviets invaded neighbouring Afghanistan in December 1979 to 'stabilise' a Soviet-sympathetic government in Afghanistan whose rule was being challenged by civil unrest.⁸ For the United States, it was imperative that the Soviets not invade a sovereign nation without reprimand. The question for the Americans was how to punish the Soviets for this infraction most effectively.

The 1980 Summer Olympic Games were to be hosted in the Soviet capital Moscow. The Games offer an occasion for the host nation to portray positive images of their nation to a global audience, and host nations have exercised this opportunity throughout Olympic history.⁹ The Americans, and other Western nations, worried about the Moscow Games serving as a propaganda vessel which would extol the superiority of the Soviet way of life over the Capitalist West.¹⁰ In light of the Soviet invasion, the Americans began to take measures to undermine the Soviet Union, measures which included weakening the Moscow Games. Their first step was to lobby for a



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boycott of the Olympics in an attempt to sabotage them.¹¹ Lloyd Cutler, counsel to President Carter, embodied the American fixation on the Soviets' propaganda attempts when he stated that the Moscow Games, "may be the most important single event in the Soviet Union since World War Two." Cutler went on to explain that an American decision to boycott the Games would "deny them what was going to be an enormous propaganda victory."¹²

Canada, the Cold War, and Sport

Canada's foreign policy from the early 20th century onwards was closely related to the policy decisions of the neighbouring United States. This coupling of policies manifested itself in various joint economic ventures and treaties, including policy co-ordination over territorial disputes, trade treaties, and the auto industry.¹³ While Canadian foreign policy was inextricably tied to the United States, the Canadians did possess the capability to make autonomous decisions which at times ran counter to American policy. During the 1970s, the Pierre Trudeau government opposed many American foreign policy decisions. For example, the US instigated a trade embargo on Cuba, while Canada continued to trade with Cuba, becoming one of its largest trade partners.¹⁴ Another point of contention where Canadian and American policies were at odds was the China situation, where Taiwan and the People's Republic of China both vied to be recognised as China. Whereas the United States allied itself with Taiwan and did not recognise the People's Republic of China, Trudeau opposed this and recognised the People's Republic of China as the legitimate inheritors of the name China. In fact, Taiwanese athletes were not allowed to compete in the 1976 Montreal Olympics under the name China.¹⁵ This incident also highlighted the Canadian connection between sport and politics during this era.

Sport in Canada in the post-Second World War period began to assume a more prominent presence in society relative to the pre-Second World War timeframe. The Canadian media's increased coverage of sport raised the visibility and popularity of sport in Canada.¹⁶ Simply put, more people were able to see, know, and understand what was happening in Canadian and international sport. With the increased symbolic political capital associated with athletic excellence during the Cold War globally, Canada became increasingly conscious and concerned over the performances of Canadian athletes in the quasi-political athletic landscape during the Cold War years.¹⁷ For this reason, the federal government took greater interest in improving Canadian sport performances. The Trudeau government in 1968 sought to make Canadians proud of their athletes and established a task force to investigate amateur sport in Canada.¹⁸

The beginning: an Olympics like any other

Canadian preparations began in earnest for the 1980 Moscow Olympics and initially resembled preparations for any other Olympic Games. The COA was busy raising and allocating funds to various sport federations to give Canadian athletes the best chances to succeed on the world stage. The COA Club Assistance programme was a major means by which Canadian sport federations, such as high profile sports like hockey and less publicized sports such as equestrian were granted funding. Canadian sport federations badgered the Club Assistance programme for funding to increase their athletes' chances at achieving Olympic success.¹⁹ Despite the fact that the Games were to be hosted in the capital of the leading nation of the rival Eastern bloc, Canada – and more specifically the COA – had no compelling reason to treat these Olympics as any different from the Olympics that had preceded them. In due course, however, the serene atmosphere which prevailed in COA circles regarding Canadian participation took an about turn.

The Soviet Invasion and a change of course

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 was the catalyst for the alteration of the COA's discourse surrounding their participation in the 1980 Moscow Olympics though it took some time to take effect. Initially, the American and Canadian reactions to the invasion were relatively muted.²⁰ The Canadian Clark government issued a statement from Secretary of State Flora MacDonald on 28th December expressing the Canadian government's 'deep regret' over the invasion but made no mention of possible sanctions or concerns about further Soviet expansionism in Central Asia.²¹ This mild opening response by the United States and Canada, however, was not a lasting one. The day after MacDonald's meek reaction to the invasion, American President Jimmy Carter called an emergency meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) nations to seek a more robust response to the Soviets than simply protestation.²² That emergency meeting was the stimulus for the increased decibel levels of the condemnation of the Soviet invasion from the United States and Canada, and others.

The seriousness of the threat posed to the Olympic Movement by the resulting political agitation in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was not lost upon IOC President Lord Killanin. On 3rd January 1980, Killanin issued a press release on behalf of the IOC in which he none-too-subtly pleaded that nations not draw the Olympics into Cold War politics. Killanin urged, "I have always felt that at times administrators, and even the International Olympic Committee, forget



The discussions on whether or not to boycott Moscow coincided with parliamentary elections in Canada. The Progressive Conservative Party led by Prime Minister Joe Clark was perceived as a weak government. After eight months in power, they were defeated by Pierre Trudeau's Liberal Party on 18th February 1980. Trudeau had already been elected three times since 1968.

Photo: Liberapedia

Afghanistan followed Greece into the Lenin Stadium in Moscow on 19th July 1980 carrying their national flag. This was designed to give an impression of normality. In fact it was more of a phoney Olympic peace. 42 countries including Canada responded to US President Jimmy Carter's call for a boycott. A further 24 did not appear for various reasons.

Photo: Volker Kluge Archive



that the athletes come first, and in no way should be prevented from competing in international competition by political, racial or religious discrimination."²³ Killanin sensed the danger of political intrusion onto the Olympic Games and the damage it could cause the Olympic Movement. By disguising his plea that nations not use the Games as a political tool as part of a larger, typically Olympic, altruistic ideal, the IOC made a pre-emptive strike against the retaliatory American measures against the Soviets before they became solidified. In the press release, Killanin sought to appeal to governments not to interfere with their NOCs. Killanin stated, "I take this opportunity to recall the procedures regarding entries for the Games ... The invitations for the Games of the XXIInd Olympiad in Moscow, from 19th July to 3rd August, will be sent to all National Olympic Committees by or before the end of January 1980. It is the prerogative of the National Olympic Committees only to accept or refuse these invitations and then nominate, in conjunction with the national federations, the individual competitors."²⁴ Killanin recognised the precarious position the Olympic Movement faced if Cold War political tensions entered the 1980 Moscow Games and nations refused to participate.

On 4th January, Prime Minister Joe Clark stated at a news conference that Canada was unlikely to boycott

the Games because it would have 'no practical effect' on the Afghanistan situation, while also stating his refusal to recognise the new Soviet-backed Afghanistan government.²⁵ At the same time, Carter was ramping up his government's anti-Soviet measures, including banning further grain sales to the Soviets while restricting Soviet fishing and air landing rights in the United States, amongst other prohibitions. Most ominously for the IOC, however, was Carter's statement that the United States might pursue a boycott of the Moscow Games if Afghanistan was not freed of Soviet military influence.²⁶ It did not take long for the Clark government to mirror the harsh policies of the Americans towards the Soviets as on 11st January the Canadian government restricted wheat sales and suspended talks on long-term credit agreements with the Soviets.²⁷

Judgement day and the consolidation of the boycott

The increasing antagonism of political rhetoric was punctuated by an angry crescendo on 20th January when Carter issued an ultimatum to the Soviet Union: get your troops out of Afghanistan in one month or American athletes would boycott the Moscow Olympics.²⁸ The COA quickly issued a response, recognising the potential impact the American position would have on Canada and its athletes. The COA sent out a worried statement presenting its opposition to the boycott.

The 20th January statement read, "The COA does not agree that participation in the Olympic Games in Moscow represents an endorsement of the government of the Soviet Union or any of its activities." The COA went so far as to state that, if anything, sending Canadian athletes to the Moscow Games would send a stronger message to the Soviet regime than a boycott would, and stated, "This might well be more effective pressure, if such is desired, on the Soviet Union because of all of the Western media which will be present and reporting on the Games."²⁹ They continued by explaining, "We will consider the matter very carefully and will seek such guidance from our athletes, members, the IOC and others as we may consider appropriate."³⁰ That the COA strategically omitted referring to the Canadian government amongst the constituents it would seek guidance from pointedly underlined a statement which sought to reaffirm the COA's independence and autonomy in decision making.

On 25th January the Clark government echoed the American sentiments that if the Soviets did not withdraw their troops from Afghanistan, Canada's athletes would boycott the Moscow Games.³¹ James Worrall, former COA President and a Canadian IOC Member at the time, stated "On January 25, the Clark government did as expected and voted to support Carter's ultimatum.



The Cabinet further advocated that Canada also should boycott the Olympic Games. At the same time, media coverage and public opinion in Canada were beginning to support the boycott effort.³² Here, Worrall alluded to the follow-the-leader mentality the Clark government practiced during 1979–1980. Worrall went on to decry the increasingly consolidated boycott position of the American and Canadian governments, writing, “I was desperately upset by the direction this was all going. I did not agree that the Olympic Games and the athletes alone should bear the entire burden of protest. For at this stage, neither the Canadian nor the American government was proposing any other initiative which might bring pressure to bear on the USSR.”³³

On the evening of the Cabinet decision, Worrall, in his memoir *My Olympic Journey*, explained that the COA was being pressured directly by the Clark government. Worrall recalled, “I returned home quite late to find an ominous envelope, marked OHMS, lying on the floor inside my door.” The envelope contained an invitation to meet with Prime Minister Clark the next day at 24 Sussex Drive, along with Dick Pound, Roger Jackson (Canadian Olympic Gold medalist and member of the COA), Steve Paproski (Minister of Sport), and Flora Macdonald (Minister of External Affairs).³⁴ At the meeting, Clark “told us bluntly that his government considered it undesirable for the Canadian Olympic team to take part in the Olympic Games in Moscow.” Pound and Worrall, both Canadian IOC Members, unsuccessfully argued with Clark, who by now had publically supported the boycott, by stating that participation in the Olympic Games was entirely the prerogative of the COA.³⁵

The Lake Placid IOC Session

With the backdrop of an increasingly strident and well-organised movement, the boycott storm clouds descended upon the 82nd IOC Session in Lake Placid which began on 9th February 1980. Seemingly to highlight the IOC’s and American’s diametrically opposed views on how to move forward after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, President Carter decided not to attend the Lake Placid IOC Session. Instead, he

sent Secretary of State Cyrus Vance in his stead.³⁶ In no uncertain terms, Vance’s solemn opening remarks at the Session presented the United States position on the upcoming Moscow Games. With clarity, Vance provided the reasons for the American position, stating, “In the view of my government, it would be a violation of this fundamental Olympic principle to conduct or attend Olympic Games in a nation which is currently engaging in an aggressive war, and has refused to comply with the world community’s demand to halt its aggression and withdraw its forces.”³⁷

The bold expression of American rhetoric surrounding the Soviet invasion sent a direct message to the IOC that the United States was serious about boycotting the Games and was equally intent on trying to convince others to do so as well. Vance carefully laid out the American reasoning for this position by presenting logic for boycotting within the framework of IOC ideology. IOC rhetoric demanded recognition of the altruistic aims of the Olympic Movement, preaching the virtues of the Olympics as the pre-eminent sporting competition due to its highly moral form of competition. Vance used this IOC rhetoric to appeal to both the IOC and other nations to boycott the Moscow Games.

Vance closed with strong words: “Let me make my government’s position clear: we will oppose the participation of an American team in any Olympic Games in the capital of an invading nation. This position is firm. It reflects the deep convictions of the United States Congress and the American people.”³⁸ With that, Vance left the stage. His sentiments, however, loomed ominously. Following Vance’s speech, Worrall angrily reflected, “Vance’s dissertation angered just about every IOC Member and did a great deal to create unity within the IOC. I was mad as hell and even more determined that the IOC must never yield to political pressure.”³⁹

The strong tone of Vance’s speech distressed IOC President Lord Killanin as well. Killanin was desperately trying to avoid an East/West schism in the Olympic Movement. Gathering himself, Killanin did his best to put on a good face when he addressed the Lake Placid Session in his opening of the IOC Session. He did not shy away from the political agitation occurring, claiming, “We live in a world where there are totalitarian regimes of the Left and the Right. Are there any countries which can claim to fully respect human rights, and not to practise discrimination of some kind?”⁴⁰ Killanin continued by stating, “I would implore all those with different opinions and feelings: do not use the Olympic Games to divide the world, but to unite it – do not use athletes for the solution of political problems!”⁴¹ The assault on the legitimacy of the Soviets hosting of the Olympics continued when Robert J. Kane, President of the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) addressed the IOC Executive Board. Kane exemplified the USOC’s

The former hurdler and schoolmaster James Worrall, Canada’s flagbearer in 1936 in Berlin, was President of the Canadian Olympic Association from 1964 to 1968. He had been an IOC Member since 1967. In 1974 he was elected to the Executive Board.

Photo: John Petrella Archive

newly forged support for the boycott movement, they had initially opposed the boycott, initiated by the Carter administration. Kane railed against the Soviets, stating, "This act of war by the Soviet Union makes it impossible for its capital city of Moscow to fulfill the aims of the Olympic Movement. The Soviet Union has destroyed the Olympic concepts of educating young people through sport to help build a better and more peaceful world."⁴² The stage was set, the COA was facing a struggle against a rising tide of pro-boycott sentiment within Canada and the Western bloc more generally.

Hope springs eternal: Government change and a reversal of the boycott decision?

There was still a chance for the Canadian government to give the COA approval to send athletes to Moscow; indeed there was still the prospect that the Canadian government might yet oppose the boycott movement. The possibility of reversing the Canadian position relied upon a new government replacing the Clark administration in the 18th February 1980 Canadian federal election. Renewed hope for Canadian participation in the Moscow Games was realised when Pierre Trudeau's Liberals defeated the incumbent Clark Progressive Conservatives.⁴³ The subsequent suspension of parliament until 14th April meant that no definitive decisions about the boycott could be made until then, which gave the COA hope to turn the tide. Another source of hope for the Canadian anti-boycott movement was placed in Trudeau's non-conformist foreign policy

major source of funding for Canadian athletes, firmly joined to the boycott movement. This development made sending athletes to Moscow difficult financially. However, the COA remained convinced that boycotting was the wrong decision. At the same lunch with the Olympic Trust Worrall was, "equally adamant that Canada should not boycott the Moscow Games, but I was unable to change their minds. Shortly afterward, the Trust formalized their support for the boycott. This meant that the Trust could make life financially difficult for the COA, withholding funds they had raised to send our team to Moscow."⁴⁷

The COA, increasingly isolated in their anti-boycott stance, held a vote at the end of March to decide if Canadian athletes should be sent to Moscow or not. By a resounding margin – 25 against a boycott, 5 for the boycott with one abstention – the COA Executive and Board of Directors voted in favour of going to Moscow.⁴⁸ The fallout was instantaneous and severe. The Olympic Trust immediately announced they would withhold the funding under its control.⁴⁹ The newly-minted Liberal government offered a last hope for the COA in their quest to send athletes to the Olympics. The hope of the COA that they would have government support was dealt a hammer blow on 22th April when the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mark MacGuigan, made a statement in the House of Commons which brought the COA to its knees. MacGuigan stated, "We have decided that the circumstances leave us no choice but to urge the Canadian Olympic Association to inform the Organising Committee of the 1980 Olympics that Canadian athletes will not be participating in the Games. The Government does not intend to use coercion to bring about a withdrawal. It will not revoke passports or take powers to circumscribe the right of Canadians to travel freely abroad. But should Canadian athletes participate in Moscow, they will do so without the moral or financial support of the Government of Canada."⁵⁰ The COA was now well and truly on their own if they were to send athletes to Moscow.

The scant consolation the government granted the COA, saying that it did not intend to enforce a boycott, rang fairly hollow as the very next day, 23th April, Gerald Regan, Minister Responsible for Fitness and Amateur Sport, sent a telegram to the COA reinforcing the Government of Canada's position. The telegram stated, "We believe the strongest possible stance must be taken against the USSR action and its refusal to withdraw."⁵¹ The pro-boycott stance of the media, popular opinion, and now the national government was not without some opposition, however waning the anti-boycott position was becoming. On 24th April, a letter from members of the Canadian national diving team to COA President Dick Pound made their opinions clear, "We do not support the Olympic boycott and hope the COA

Discussion in the Kremlin on 7th May 1980 between the Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, Leonid Brezhnev, and IOC President Lord Killanin, to whose right sat IOC Director Monique Berlioux. On Brezhnev's left sits Ignati Novikov, President of the Organising Committee.



stances in his previous term as Prime Minister, such as his defiance of the American embargo of Cuba.⁴⁴

When President Carter's 20th February deadline for Soviet troops to withdraw from Afghanistan passed with Soviet troops still entrenched, Carter declared that the United States would boycott the Moscow Games.⁴⁵ Eagerness to boycott was also apparent in the Canadian media and public opinion. As Worrall recounted, "I was dismayed at media and public support for the Olympic boycott. Then I was invited to lunch by some members of the Olympic Trust who also made their support of the boycott exceedingly clear."⁴⁶ The Olympic Trust, a

Photo: Official Report Moscow 1980, p. 335

will decide to participate in the Olympic Games."⁵² The boycott question still was not definitively answered in Canada given the continued resistance of the COA.

With these proclamations, both for and against the boycott, the COA's Annual Meeting on 26th April took on added significance. Another vote loomed. Despite continued insistence of key COA members Worrall and Pound that the COA should not boycott, the overwhelming support for the boycott throughout most Canada finally penetrated the COA. The COA members cast their vote and the transformation of opinion within the COA from one of defiance to one of overwhelming acceptance of the boycott was complete. The vote was 137–35 in favor. The COA resolution stated, "Accordingly the Canadian Olympic Association will not accept the invitation to participate in the Games of the XXII Olympiad."⁵³

Post-COA vote fallout

The COA's decision that Canada would indeed boycott the Moscow 1980 Olympics still drew the ire of certain factions of Canadian society. Many Canadian athletes and sport federations were angered by the decision of the COA and wanted to compete in the Games. Patrick Walter, on behalf of the Canadian rowing team, sent a letter to Lord Killanin requesting that the rowers be allowed to compete in the Olympics as individual entries, so as to sidestep the COA boycott. On 16th June, Killanin responded to Walter's letter, explaining, "The Executive Board of the IOC decided that individual entries would not be feasible, although your National Olympic Committee could still decide to send a team to the forthcoming Games, under the flag of the International Olympic Committee or the Canadian Olympic Association."⁵⁴

In spite of the relentless tide of pro-boycott sentiment, James Worrall and Dick Pound remained opposed to the boycott. Their IOC membership was a likely cause of this position. If Canada boycotted the Moscow Games, Worrall and Pound both knew it reflected badly on their ability as Canada's IOC Members, which in turn might put their promotion within the IOC hierarchy in doubt. While those two considerations are almost self-evident in explaining their anti-boycott position, another interesting reason surfaced after examination of the James Worrall Papers at ICOS. Worrall and Pound were both extremely concerned with the effects a Canadian boycott of the Moscow Games would have on Calgary's bid for the 1988 Winter Olympics. Worrall recounted that he and Pound were, "concerned that our decision to boycott would hurt the Calgary bid." The fixation of trying to stay in the IOC's good graces was evident in the concern over the delivery of the Olympic flag to Moscow from Montreal. Traditionally the Olympic flag was given



Richard W. Pound served as General Secretary of the Canadian Olympic Association from 1968–1976. He was COA President from 1977–1982. An Olympic swimmer, he was elected to the IOC in 1978.

Photo: John Petrella Archive

by the Mayor of the preceding city to the new host at the Olympic Opening Ceremony, but Jean Drapeau, Mayor of Montreal, did not defy the Canadian government and gave the Olympic flag to the Moscow hosts. Drapeau and Worrall "discussed various alternatives. If all else failed, I could certainly deliver it myself on behalf of Montreal," Worrall explained.⁵⁵ The matter was eventually settled when the IOC and the Moscow Organising Committee agreed that the two Canadian athletes who had carried the Olympic Torch into the Opening Ceremony at Montreal would fly to Moscow to deliver the Olympic flag to Moscow's Mayor.⁵⁶

Both Canadian IOC Members were worried, not only by the bad publicity of boycotting the Olympics, but in angering the incoming IOC President, Juan Antonio Samaranch. In a letter from Dick Pound to Jean Drapeau in November 1980, after the Moscow Games closed, Pound made it clear of his need to appease the new IOC President in the face of the Canadian boycott. Pound explained, "I am writing in connection with a matter which may prove to be of great assistance to the City of Calgary in connection with its forthcoming bid to host the 1988 Olympic Winter Games. On a number of occasions Juan Antonio Samaranch has mentioned to me that he has a collection of Olympic Torches from virtually every Games of the modern era with the exception of those held in Montreal." Pound queried if Drapeau would be able to give Samaranch the 'missing' torch to complete his collection and make clear the Canadian desire and commitment to hosting another Olympics, this time in Calgary.⁵⁷

Boycott Aftermath

The effects of the boycott movement of 1980 have been difficult to judge. On one hand, 42 nations boycotted the Moscow Games, significantly reducing the levels of competition and number of athletes who participated. Nonetheless, 80 countries did attend the 1980 Olympics with 5,179 athletes in total participating.⁵⁸ The Moscow Games themselves, while the competition was diluted, still featured exemplary athletic feats, as athletes broke 36 world records and 76 Olympic records, indicating

As tradition at the time demanded, IOC President Lord Killanin handed the ceremonial Olympic flag to Moscow Mayor Vladimir Promyslov at the Opening Ceremony. As a result of the boycott, his Montreal counterpart was not permitted to bring the banner. This honourable task was performed instead by Sandra Henderson and Stéphane Préfontaine, the two young athletes who had lit the cauldron in 1976.



Photo: Volker Kluge Archive

the quality of the athletic performances.⁵⁹ The Olympic Games, even without the boycotting nations, managed to survive and put forth a very high level of athletic performance, speaking to its resilience in the face of Cold War political adversity.

The Canadian decision to boycott the Moscow Games may have impacted Canada's role in international sport negatively. James Worrall lamented, "The absence in Moscow, not only of our athletes, but also of Canadian officials, was a backward step in our international sports relations. Because Canada had no candidates up for election, or re-election, we lost several golden opportunities to play an influential role internationally for the next many years."⁶⁰

Conclusion

Perhaps no example of the political character that the Olympic assumed during the Cold War is as conclusive and telling as the political boycotts of 1980 and 1984. The 1980 boycott, as shown in this essay, was driven by the Carter administration's political agenda, and this agenda was forced upon American athletes, and other national governments and their athletes.

As with many political manoeuvres during the Cold War, Canada's stance on the 1980 Olympic boycott was heavily influenced by their position as a country in the Western political bloc, of which the Americans were at the head. The Canadian government, led by Prime

Minister Joe Clark, mirrored the American government's reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and their position on the resulting boycott. This 'follow-the-leader' mentality of the Canadian government is unsurprising, and former COA leader James Worrall duly noted the predictability of Canada's mirroring of American positions.⁶¹

The COA tried vigorously to assert their autonomy from the Canadian government, and made it clear that the government should not interfere with the sending of a Canadian Olympic team to the Games. However, as two Prime Ministers gave support to the boycott, the public opinion in Canada began to favour a Canadian boycott of the Games, thereby increasing the pressure upon the COA to change its stance.

The COA eventually changed its stance, from anti-boycott to pro-boycott when the COA members voted on the issue in April 1980. Though the COA vote indicated that this decision to boycott the Games was of their own volition, the influence of the political pressures on the adoption of a pro-boycott position is undeniable. The COA remained the sole decider for Canadian athletes in name only, as the 1980 boycott episode provided an example of how politics can influence, and ultimately determine, the positions of NOCs, in this case the COA. ■

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- 3 Donald Macintosh and Michael Hawes with contributions from Donna Greenhorn and David Black, *Sport and Canadian Diplomacy* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), 11–14. See also *Beyond Mexico: Changing Americas. Vol. 1*, eds. Jean Daudelin and Edgar J. Dosman (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1995)
- 4 Stephen Wagg and David L. Andrews, "Introduction: War Minus the Shooting," in *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War*, eds. Stephen Wagg and David L. Andrews (New York: Routledge, 2007), 2, 4. See also Christopher Hill, *Olympic Politics* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1992), 1–15.
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- 6 Nicholas Sarantakes, *Dropping the Torch: Jimmy Carter, the Olympic Boycott, and the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 196–210.
- 7 Sarantakes, 53.
- 8 Christopher Hill, *Olympic Politics*, 120.
- 9 David Whitson, "Olympic Hosting in Canada: Promotional Ambitions, Political Challenges" in *Rethinking the Olympics: Cultural Histories of the Modern Games*, ed. Robert K. Barney (Morgantown, WV: Sport & Global Cultures Series 2010), 357–358.
- 10 Alfred E. Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games*, 186.
- 11 Christopher Hill, *Olympic Politics*, 124–134. Hill's account is succinct and provides an excellent overview. For a more in-depth, detailed account of the genesis American boycott movement see Derick Hulme Jr, *The Political Olympics*.
- 12 Derick Hulme Jr, *The Political Olympics*, 16.

- 13 Donald Macintosh and Michael Hawes, *Sport and Canadian Diplomacy*, 4–6.
- 14 Robert Wright and Lana Wylie, "Introduction: Worlds Apart," in *Our Place in the Sun: Canada and Cuba in the Castro Era*, eds. Robert Wright and Lana Wylie (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2009), 15–20.
- 15 Macintosh and Hawes, 97–98.
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- 17 Ibid., 5.
- 18 Ibid., 7.
- 19 James Worrall Collection, Box 15, Folder 2, Letter to Mr. Imrie Szabo from W. Denis Whitaker, 4th August 1978.
- 20 Donald Macintosh and Michael Hawes, *Sport and Canadian Diplomacy*, 92.
- 21 Ibid.
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- 27 Donald Macintosh and Michael Hawes, *Sport and Canadian Diplomacy*, 95.
- 28 Christopher Hill, *Olympic Politics*, 124–126.
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- 32 James Worrall, *My Olympic Journey: Sixty Years with Canadian Sport and the Olympic Games*, (Canada: Canadian Olympic Association, 2000), 181.
- 33 Ibid., 181.
- 34 James Worrall, *My Olympic Journey*, 181.
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- 36 Derick Hulme Jr, *The Political Olympics*, 49. See also James Worrall, *My Olympic Journey*, 182–183.
- 37 James Worrall Collection, Box 15, Red Folder, Remarks of the Secretary of State before the Solemn Opening of the International Olympic Committee, 82nd Session Lake Placid, New York, 9th February 1980.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 James Worrall, *My Olympic Journey*, 182.
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- 41 Ibid.
- 42 James Worrall Collection, Box 15, Red Folder, Statement by Mr. Robert J. Kane, President of the United States Olympic Committee, to the IOC Executive Board, February 1980.
- 43 Macintosh and Hawes, *Sport and Canadian Diplomacy*, 97.
- 44 Ibid., 97–98.
- 45 James Worrall, *My Olympic Journey*, 186.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Ibid.
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- 52 James Worrall Collection, Box 24, Folder 20, Letter from members of the Canadian national diving team to Dick Pound, 24th April 1980.
- 53 James Worrall, *My Olympic Journey*, 187.
- 54 James Worrall Collection, Box 15, Folder 4, Letter from Lord Killanin to Mr. Patrick Walter, 16th June 1980.
- 55 James Worrall, *My Olympic Journey*, 189.
- 56 James Worrall, *My Olympic Journey*, 191.
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Oldest Sporting Event Harder to Win than the Olympics

2008 Olympic double Sculls champion Mark Hunter has paid tribute to the winners of the oldest continuously held sporting competition in the World. The Doggetts Coat and Badge sculling staged on London's River Thames this summer for the 300th year.

"This is very different to racing 2000 metres. You have a four and a half mile course, you are going to be rowing with the tide, it is going to be very choppy in certain places." Said Hunter, once a waterman on the Thames himself. "Its learning about what the tide sets are, what archways to go through, there's a little bit of knowing where you are going, understanding where the stream is and trying to make use of the knowledge they've studied over the five six seven years as an apprentice"

22 year old Harry McCarthy from Blackheath became the latest to add his name to a roll of honour begun in 1715. The race along the River Thames from London Bridge to Cadogan Pier in Chelsea was started by Thomas Doggett, an actor and manager at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.

Doggett himself died in 1721 but in his will he left instructions for "Five pounds for a badge of silver weighing about 12 ounces and representing Liberty to be given to be rowed for by six young Watermen according to my custom. 18 Shillings for a cloath (sic) for a livery whereon the said badge is to be put, One pound one shilling for making up the said livery."



Eventual winner Harry McCarthy in the shadow of HMS Belfast.

Photo: Philip Barker

The organisation was soon undertaken by the Fishmongers, one of the traditional livery companies in the city of London who welcomed the International Olympic Committee to their headquarters in 1904 and 1908. They were supported this year by the Thames Tideway tunnel.

McCarthy will receive his bright red Doggetts Coat at a special ceremony at the Fishmongers Hall below London Bridge. Previous winners will gather to honour him including 1968 Olympic single sculls finalist Kenny Dwan, a winner of the Doggetts in 1971.

"Doggetts was probably the hardest race I ever rowed" said Dwan. "The Olympics was a multi lane international event, but this had more pressure on it because all of our families had worked on the river for many years."

Philip Barker