

# **The IOC and the Question of Two German NOCs After World War II**

Gordon MacDonald  
The University of Western Ontario, London

Following the Second World War, the International Olympic committee (IOC) faced altered geopolitical realities for which it was not well prepared. In the aftermath of the global upheaval, a number of areas of the Olympic world went through a period of political uncertainty. This led to situations where contending political groups claimed responsibility for Olympic matters in contested geographical areas such as China and Korea. This problem also arose in Europe when Germany was divided into separate ideological spheres of influence after the War.

Anti-German feelings in Europe had eased enough by 1950 that the IOC was ready to readmit the German National Olympic Committee (NOC) to the Olympic Movement. Almost as soon as this action was taken, however, a group of sports people from the region of East Germany approached the IOC with a request that their NOC be recognized as well. This presented the IOC members with a dilemma since their own rules stipulated that only one NOC per country could be recognized, and most members believed that the two regions of Germany were actually one country. The issue of inclusive German representation in the Olympic Games confronted the IOC for the next two decades.

Even though East and West Germany were separated ideologically and politically, there was still hope in the early 1950s (at least within the IOC) that the two regions would soon be reunited. This contributed to a reluctance on the part of the IOC to consider the two Germanies as separate. In addition, IOC recognition of the East

German NOC would have led to a larger political problem. Had the IOC recognized the East German NOC, this action would have been seen as a tacit recognition of a state which was not recognized by the U.N. or many western countries during the early decades of the Cold War. Thirdly, IOC President Avery Brundage was a major public proponent of the separation of sport and politics, Hence, he often stalled or avoided discussion of the issue until a time when any action taken by the IOC with regard to recognizing the East German NOC would not be seen in an explicitly political light.

Only when the international political scene had evolved to the point where the two Germanies were truly seen as separate did the IOC agree to recognize the East German NOC. After this recognition the two German NOCs existed and participated in the Olympic Movement as separate entities; a situation which lasted for another two decades until the reunification the IOC anticipated in ten 1950s finally occurred.



**“Our gang”**