



## Solidarity for Ukraine –issue 29 – Citius, altius, fortius - Communiter

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The Institute for Research and Information on Volunteering (iriv) is associated to the international solidarity for Ukraine attacked by Russia on 24th February 2022. After a pandemic that has weakened democratic countries with the disturbing rise of conspiracy theories and hate speech on social networks, we do hope this war in Europe will be an opportunity to reflect on a new solidarity, among European and international allies. This issue is the 7th one for 2024 and the 28th since the beginning of the war in Ukraine...Paris hosts the Summer Olympics from 26 July 2024 under a special threat from all enemies of Europe and Democracy. The war in Ukraine began just after the Winter Olympics in Beijing in February 2022. In a first point, we will discuss the often mixed message of

Olympism in the past. In a second point, we will see how the Games were a battleground between blocks during the Cold War, during the time of the Soviet Union. In a third point, we will analyze the impact of the IOC's decisions on the war in Ukraine, but especially on its champions, and the message sent. The Centennial of the 1924 Paris Games, with Coubertin's controversial personality, did not defend the spirit of modernity they were supposed to promote. The Paris 2024 Olympics are opening in a climate of extreme and worrying national and international tension. May the committed citizens of the world of sport be more far-sighted and courageous in 2024 by defending a 21st century Olympism that contributes concretely to world peace. Citius, Altius, Fortius – Communiter, "Faster, Higher, Stronger – Together", this time for a good cause.

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\* le logo a été dessiné par Caritas Canada en février 2022

## Unpeaceful olympism

Several episodes of Olympism left a lasting impression on people's minds, as the French public television channel France TV (1) recalled. Two took place in Germany.

The first event was the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936, three years after Hitler came to power. The United States and Western democracies questioned whether it was moral to support the Olympic Games under the Nazi regime (2). In June 1933, the German Olympic Committee made a commitment to the International Olympic Committee to respect the charter of the Games, which banned all discrimination in the sporting world. African-American newspapers oppose the boycott of the Games. For journalists from the Philadelphia Tribune or the Chicago Defender, the victory of black athletes must both discredit racism and the «Aryan» supremacy of Nazi ideology and trigger a surge of black pride in the United States. The African-American sprinters (Eulace Peacock, Jesse Owens and Ralph Metcalfe) are also looking to compete in the Games, winning 14 medals. “The persistent social and economic discrimination they encountered on their return to the United States only underscored the irony of their victory in racist Germany” (2). The results are mixed, the Olympic spirit has not triumphed.

The second significant event was the taking of hostages in Munich on 5 September 1972 of eleven Israeli athletes by a «Black September» Palestinian terrorist commando (3). The rescue operation mounted by the German police turned into a fiasco (4). The poorly prepared German police improvised. The death toll is heavy with 17 dead including all members of the Israeli delegation. The President of the International Olympic Committee, Avery Brundage, sees no objection to continuing the Games, he will be replaced on 21 August by Lord Killanin in the face of the uproar provoked by his decision with a severely criticized mandate - Avery Brundage was a white supremacist. Only a tribute ceremony is held on 6 September in memory of the 11 Israeli athletes killed by Palestinian terrorists. This tragic episode was recounted in detail, and well documented, in Steven Spielberg's film «Munich» (5). Israeli Prime Minister at the time Golda Meir entrusted a special mission to her intelligence services, dubbed «Operation Wrath of God» : to find all the still living members of the commando at the origin of this bloody terrorist attack which aroused considerable emotion in Israel and in the world (6). Again Olympism was tragically instrumentalized.

According to the Olympic Charter, the Games are apolitical and foreign to any geopolitical event, which is impossible and unrealistic. The Olympic show is one of the most popular in the era of mass communication that accompanied the modern Games. They provided a platform for the protagonists of the Cold War that pitted the Eastern bloc led by the USSR, the Western bloc with memorable events such as the boycott of the Olympics in Moscow in 1980 by the United States and Los Angeles in 1984 by the USSR.

## “Olympic spirit” during the Cold War

During the Cold War, which lasted more than forty years (1945-1989), the conquest of space and the Olympic Games were major symbolic places of ideological confrontation. Their emotional impact is maximum. «To land the moon» is a sign of power, we are implicitly the best, with an exceptional dimension. The message is clear: “We succeeded because we are on the right side of history.” Yuri Gagarin, a Soviet cosmonaut, was able to give an edifying testimony of his space mission: he had not seen God... The terms were also different: Soviet “cosmonauts” opposed American “astronauts”. The exploits of the national teams were celebrated with a first conspiracy theory: the Americans would not have been the first to walk on the moon in July 1969, during the Apollo 11 mission, of Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin. Everything would be a NASA montage; the videos have multiplied and are still flocking on social networks, in the pro-Russian camp.

With the Olympics, the emotional and almost mystical charge is total. Like modern ordeals (tournaments organized in the Middle Ages to settle conflicts between rival lords), the medals won by the blocks in presence must bring the masterful demonstration of the superiority of one ideological system over the other. The body of the athletes was considered as a field of experimentation as another- to improve their performances, unscrupulous coaches on the most elementary ethical rules did not hesitate to load their athletes. No block escaped the rule, but it was forbidden and sanctioned in the West; while it was a common practice, part of the «normal» training in the East. The physique of swimmers who were not always considered women is remembered - male hormones in their blood tests were abnormal. (7)

The augmented man was not born in the 21st century but in the 20th century, embodied in the American series «The man who was worth three billion»; a bionic man with robotic prostheses, artificial organs, brain implants (8). He had his female counterpart with «Super Jaimie» (9) who could compete with his male counterpart. The sporting performance celebrated in the series enthused millions of teenage spectators equally passionate about a very comparable sporting spectacle. The sports world, like the army, celebrated this cult of performance.

Sport suffers from three evils: violence, cheating (rigged rules) and doping. The goal is to win at all costs, by flouting the rules that should govern the spirit of fair play: respect his opponent but also his own body, accept defeat, follow the rules imposed by his discipline. The Soviet Union, and the entire Eastern Bloc, demonstrated a strategy that flouted all these principles. Putin’s Russia pursued a very elaborate sports policy of the USSR, which achieved results.

Vladimir Putin is himself a decorated judoka, who has reached the highest level, internationally recognized until his intervention in Ukraine which deprived him of all his symbolic but important recognitions for the image of a strong and reassuring man that he intends to give to his opinion, and outside his borders. One is wary of such an athlete. The threat is implicit but real – “one does not play with such a man”.

## Unchanged Olympic battle in Ukraine-

Before the Olympic Games, the confrontation in the sporting world has already begun. Since the Russian invasion in Ukraine, the IOC has sanctioned Russia, considering that it had violated the Olympic truce linked to the 2022 Olympic Games in Beijing, “recommending that international federations ban their competitions from Russian soil and prohibit any official Russian symbol (anthem or flag).” (10)

The IOC confirmed its policy by suspending the Russian Olympic Committee in October 2013 because of its decision to include among its members the Ukrainian regional sports organisations of Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhia. For the international Olympic organization, it is a question of sanctioning the «violation» by the Russians of the «territorial integrity» of Ukraine, therefore of the Olympic Charter, said Mark Adams. The decision automatically deprives the Russian body of Olympic funding, but does not affect the presence of Russian athletes under a neutral banner at the 2024 Olympics in Paris.

The 58 Russian and 28 Belarusian athletes have to play individual sports and demonstrate their lack of support for the invasion of Ukraine (11). The IOC’s position varied on the participation of Russian athletes and Belarusian athletes, Moscow’s ally, in the same international competitions. They had initially recommended their exclusion, the IOC and then began in March 2023 their reintegration into world sport, under a neutral banner. Several disciplines have implemented the IOC’s recommendations - table tennis, canoeing or rowing by allowing athletes to participate without flags and as individuals. Sebastian Coe, the head of World Athletics, the International Athletics Federation, was on the contrary very firm in opposing the participation of Russian athletes “not a matter of passport or politics, but of the integrity of sport” (12).

For the participation of Russian and Belarusian fencers at the World Fencing Championships in Milan in July 2023, the applications were subject to a precise examination- 30 Russian fencers and 51 Belarusian shooters obtained the status of «neutral individual athlete» after review of their respective files by an e-reputation company, then by a law firm before the approval of the executive committee of the International Fencing Federation (FIE). No big name in the discipline has been named as the Olympic champion in individual and team saber Sofia Pozdniakova (daughter of Stanislav Pozdniakov, former saber champion and president of the Russian Olympic Committee). (13) After a successful fight, Ukrainian saber-wrestler Olga Kharlan refused to shake hands with her Russian opponent Anna Smirnova resulting in her disqualification. The Ukrainian athlete, four-time individual world champion, chose to give up a sporting victory to achieve a much more decisive victory- she conveyed a message to international public opinion. Ukraine can choose to implement the decision of a controversial sports body like the IOC, whose often sulfurous history deserves to be better known. As an individual, a champion made another choice in Milan – she expressed her free will, which is not contrary to the spirit of the sport.

## Citus, Altius, Fortius - Communiter

The Olympic Games in Paris in July 2024 implicitly referred to those of 1924, organized by Baron Pierre de Coubertin, who embodied modern Olympism. Several tributes, and even a pantheonization, were requested for this controversial figure (14). Like IOC President Avery Brundage, Coubertin supported the Third Reich at the 1936 Berlin Games. Adolf Hitler even suggested his name to the Nobel Peace Prize winner. Another argument against him, he always maintained «an ambiguous relationship with the Republic and democracy». This attitude deprived him of the Legion of Honor after the first Olympics of the modern era in Athens in 1896. In 1900, unsurprisingly, he was in the camp of anti-dreyfusards; his most fervent defenders were also from the anti-republican and collaborationist ranks such as Armand Massard, Croix de Feu, a nationalist political organization, even fascist, who also chaired the French Olympic Committee (1933-1967). Pierre de Coubertin defended the sport at school but reserved it for an “elite”. He also violently opposed women’s sport. Coubertin’s «anti-Semitic, racist and colonialist positions» complete an unflattering picture contrary to the Olympic spirit.

Several sports leaders have tainted the Olympic ideal in the opposite of irenic values, and equal opportunities brought by sport. The year 2024 could be the occasion for a critical analysis of this past that is not in the honor of sport. While many sports leaders have a sulfurous past, many athletes have been able to defend the sporting and Olympic ideal with panache. In the fight against sexual harassment, homophobia, racism or xenophobia, they were able to carry the sports values of respect for the rules and its opponent, and a spirit of fair play. Many champions have been “role models” for many youths. We think of Marie-Josée Pérec for athletics (competition can give confidence to young girls) or Teddy Riner for judo (an extraordinary personality with exemplary team spirit) or Marina Navratilova for tennis (coming out), or Jeannie Longo for cycling (for physical resistance) or Sarah Abitbol for figure skating (denouncing sexual abuse). Sport can also enable Learning about diversity in all its forms - social, gender, age and the diversity of teams and supporters.

In the war between Russia and Ukraine, the challenger, whom the sports bettors would have given losing, the smallest, the least «strong», did not bite the dust. He has assets: an exceptional «fighting spirit» and a close-knit team, which has overcome major setbacks (failed counter-offensive in the summer of 2023). Many athletes have experienced desert crossings, often after injuries. Courage and physical resistance are not enough, it is also necessary to work his mind, his «stupid» say the sports coaches. An ongoing exercise that requires a critical but balanced analysis of one’s mistakes, obstacles overcome and progress made.

«*Citius, altius, fortius*» but above all «*Communiter*». Ukraine and Ukrainians as a sports team will not be able to win without supporters - the support of those who believe in them.

- (1) Emission du 27 janvier 2024 – France Info
- (2) « 1936, les Jeux olympiques nazis de Berlin : la prise de position des noirs américains et les États-Unis à l'ère « Jim Crow » »- Encyclopédie multimédia de la Shoah- téléchargé le 5 février 2024- <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/fr/article/the-nazi-olympics-berlin-1936-african-american-voices-and-jim-crow-america>
- (3) The name is inspired by September 12, 1970 - "Black September": the Hashemite kingdom of King Hussein of Jordan triggers military operations against the fedayins of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), led by Yasser Arafat... The Jordanian army massacred thousands of Palestinians and Arafat himself nearly perished. It was followed by the creation of a secret and terroristic organization, "Black September", which carried out many bloody attacks (make the Jordanian Prime Minister) - <https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceinter/podcasts/rendez-vous-avec-x/rendez-vous-avec-x-du-lundi-09-aout-2021-5947989>
- (4) « 1972, tragédie aux Jeux olympiques de Munich Lumni platform for teachers- Ministry of Education - <https://enseignants.lumni.fr/fiche-media/00000005372/1972-tragedie-aux-jeux-olympiques-de-munich.html>
- (5) Steven Spielberg « Munich », Etats -Unis, 2005
- (6) « L'Opération colère de Dieu ou la vengeance de Golda Meir », émission « Affaires sensibles », a documentary by Gaspard Wallut Radio France, 20 June 2023- <https://www.radiofrance.fr/franceinter/podcasts/affaires-sensibles/affaires-sensibles-du-mardi-20-juin-2023-5256490>
- (7) In these hormones, the most important, because of their powerful action, are testosterone and dihydrotestosterone.
- (8) « The Six Million Dollar Man », série télévisée américaine (1973-1978) sur ABC
- (9) “The Bionic Woman”, série télévisée américaine (1976-1978) sur ABC puis NBC
- (10) « Jeux olympiques 2024 : le CIO suspend le comité olympique russe « avec effet immédiat », Le Monde avec AFP, 12 octobre 2023- [https://www.lemonde.fr/sport/article/2023/10/12/jeux-olympiques-2024-le-cio-suspend-le-comite-olympique-russe-avec-effet-immediat\\_6193996\\_3242.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/sport/article/2023/10/12/jeux-olympiques-2024-le-cio-suspend-le-comite-olympique-russe-avec-effet-immediat_6193996_3242.html)
- (11) Benoît Vitkine « En Russie, les sportifs se déchirent sur le JO 2024 », Le Monde 13 avril 2024
- (12) Entretien de Sebastian Coe, propos recueillis par Yann Bouchez et Nicolas Lepeltier, Le Monde, jeudi 2 mai 2024
- (13) « Nous ne leur serrons jamais la main » , Le Monde avec Afp, 28 juillet 2023 [https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2023/07/28/nous-ne-leur-serrons-jamais-la-main-apres-sa-disqualification-contre-une-adversaire-russe-l-escrimeuse-ukrainienne-olga-kharlan-assume-son-geste\\_6183651\\_3210.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2023/07/28/nous-ne-leur-serrons-jamais-la-main-apres-sa-disqualification-contre-une-adversaire-russe-l-escrimeuse-ukrainienne-olga-kharlan-assume-son-geste_6183651_3210.html)
- (14) Patrick Clastres « Faut-il panthéoniser Coubertin », Le Monde, 18 janvier 2024

Newsletter written on Monday 5 February 2024- updated on Tuesday 25 June 2024





**Plan International**, en Pologne, Roumanie et Moldavie, pour apporter aide matérielle et psychosociale aux jeunes ukrainiens et à leur famille, et [sollicite des dons](https://formulaire.plan-international.fr/urgence-ukraine/~mon-don) pour ce faire.- <https://formulaire.plan-international.fr/urgence-ukraine/~mon-don>

**L'Aide médicale et caritative France-Ukraine** - envoi de convois d'aide humanitaire, des soins aux blessés, des échanges de savoir-faire médical, une aide psychologique et organise des colonies de vacances pour les enfants orphelins - HelloAsso - <https://www.helloasso.com/associations/aide%20medicale%20caritative%20france%20ukraine/collectes/aider-ukraine-amurgence-help-ukraine/don>

**Le Comité d'aide médicale Ukraine** - réfugiés en transit dans l'ouest du pays, et collecte fonds, médicaments et équipements pour l'hébergement et les soins via ses partenaires français, l'association SAFE et l'organisation FONDEMOS. - <http://www.cam-z.org/en/news/121/>

**JeVeuxAider.gouv.fr** est la plateforme publique du bénévolat, - une page dédiée Mobilisons-nous pour l'Ukraine .- <https://www.jeveuxaider.gouv.fr/engagement/benevolat-ukraine/>

**Les Banques alimentaires** - une aide d'urgence à apporter aux frontières de l'Ukraine, dans les pays frontaliers accueillant des réfugiés - <https://www.banquealimentaire.org/urgence-ukraine>

**La Protection Civile et l'Association des maires de France** ont établi une [liste](#) (lits de camps, sacs de couchage, lingettes, conserves, pansements hémostatiques, solutions antiseptiques ...).

**L'Association des maires de France** a dressé les [lieux de collecte](#) à travers toute la France. Les Maires de France appellent à la [solidarité avec l'Ukraine](#) . De nombreuses villes de France organisent des collectes de produits de première nécessité - <https://www.amf.asso.fr/documents-les-maires-france-appellent-la-solidarite-avec-lukraine/41122>

**La plateforme officielle** « [Je m'engage pour l'Ukraine](#) » lancée le 8 mars 2022 par le gouvernement pour accompagner les Français souhaitant héberger chez eux des Ukrainiens réfugiés et accueillis en France.- <https://parrainage.refugies.info/>

Les associations, fondations, entreprises et collectivités territoriales peuvent utiliser ce [formulaire en ligne](#) pour renseigner leur capacité d'hébergement.- <https://www.demarches-simplifiees.fr/commencer/hebergement-personne-morale-ukraine>

**Bibliothèque sans frontière (BSF)** - Depuis le début de l'offensive russe en Ukraine, BSF se mobilise et déploie, partout en Europe, des solutions d'urgence pour l'accueil et l'intégration des populations réfugiées. « Bonjour France » est une application pour smartphone innovante et totalement gratuite, qui propose un apprentissage accéléré du français depuis l'ukrainien, disponible depuis le 19 octobre 2022.

<https://www.bibliosansfrontieres.org/2022/10/14/bsf-lance-bonjour-france-une-application-innovante-dapprentissage-du-francais-pour-les-refugies-ukrainiens/>

La mission catholique de l'Eglise polonaise en France suggère également le lien suivant : <https://mission-catholique-polonaise.pl/polska-we-francji/pere-brzys-la-mcp-lance-une-initiative-nationale-pour-aider-lukraine/> - **Source** : conférence des évêques de France