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# The Diplomatic Campaign Against the Short-Lived 1968 Berlin Olympic Bid

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In 1963 the West Berlin mayor proposed a joint bid from West and East Berlin to host the 1968 Olympic Games. West Germany's closest allies sought to persuade the West German and Berlin governments to stop the bid, which both supported but had largely kept secret from their allies. This episode demonstrates not only the significance which foreign ministries have long attributed to international sport, but also their clear involvement to actively end another country's Olympic aspirations because of the diplomatic ramifications, particularly the potential to challenge the four-power control of Berlin, and their own self-serving interests in hosting the same event.

In October 1963 the International Olympic Committee (IOC) selected the host of the 1968 Summer Olympics from among four cities: Buenos Aires, Argentina; Detroit, United States; Lyon, France; and Mexico City, Mexico. Other European cities had expressed an earlier interest in hosting the games, but possible bids from Moscow and Vienna never panned out, nor did others from Lausanne, Brussels or Budapest.<sup>1</sup> For a few months in 1963, another city attempted to be a late entrant to the contest. West Berlin mayor (and future chancellor of West Germany) Willy Brandt attempted to organise a joint bid from West and East Berlin to host the 1968 games.

It was not simply East and West Germans who had an interest in this bid from the divided city, however. West Germany's allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), particularly the tripartite powers of the United States, Britain and France, paid close attention to the progress of the Berlin bid. These states did their best to quash these plans because of its political implications within the Cold War. West Germany's allies had first heard rumblings about this plan in January 1963. Global press coverage of the Berlin bid in May 1963 noted its political challenges but also highlighted the potential power of sport over politics if Berlin hosted the games. Western foreign ministries, however, formed a united front against the Berlin Olympic bid, which they felt went against NATO's support of West Germany's nonrecognition of East Germany and threatened the special status and official four-power control of Berlin. The West Berlin mayor had put forward this bid for the 1968 Olympic Games on behalf of both sides of the divided city – but without support from the communist governments of East Berlin or East Germany, which was a major issue for the bid's feasibility. The diplomatic actions against the Berlin bid were also self-serving, as the United States and France had cities bidding for the Olympics. The American and French foreign ministries, which had been supporting their candidate cities, did not want Berlin to eclipse their own bids.

These events have received surprisingly little attention for such a radical idea, particularly in light of the fierce West German–East German sporting rivalry during the final two decades of the Cold War.

<sup>1</sup> 'In Europa kandidiert nur Lyon', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 23 Feb. 1963, 11; Hugh Dauncey, 'The Failed Bid for Lyon '68, and France's Winter Olympics from Grenoble '68 to Anncely 2018: French Politics, Civil Society and Olympic Mega-Events', in Graeme Hayes and John Karamichas, eds., *Olympic Games, Mega-Events and Civil Societies: Globalization, Environment, Resistance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 87–105.

The two most prominent treatments of this episode focus on the West German motivations for proposing a joint Berlin Olympic bid. Karsten Lippmann devotes an entire chapter to this bid in his examination of Olympic politics in Germany in the 1960s, but he focuses on the origins of the bid by West German sport leaders as a propaganda stunt, the responses of the East German Olympic Committee and the International Olympic Committee, and the failures of the plan itself.<sup>2</sup> Noel Cary, on the other hand, has argued this joint Berlin bid was a calculated act on the part of the mayor of the western outpost of democracy and part of his broader outlook towards dealing with East Germany.<sup>3</sup> Martin Geyer's short discussion of the Berlin Olympic bid notes that the idea received support 'apparently also in Washington',<sup>4</sup> but as will be demonstrated, the US State Department was against such a proposition. Incorporating international sources about the 1968 Berlin Olympic bid reveals the episode's importance beyond the West German–East German relationship. The American, British and French diplomats intervened to stop the bid in order to protect their Cold War priorities in Berlin, and the Americans and French also wanted to host those same Olympic Games. The efforts by West Germany's allies demonstrate broader diplomatic interest in – and action on – an issue which scholars have, until now, only viewed from German and sporting perspectives. The Americans, British and French considered the propaganda aspects and political realities of an Olympic Games hosted across both West and East Berlin and took actions that protected their Cold War position in the city.

The idea of sport diplomacy has existed for over a century even though the term itself is more recent. Although politicians and sport officials claimed sport and politics were separate, governments have been interested in sport and how it could be harnessed in promoting their interests abroad.<sup>5</sup> Local politicians, business leaders and sports officials have long used Olympic bids and other sporting events to promote their cities to a global audience.<sup>6</sup> The postwar increase in television ownership and technological innovations which expanded live broadcasts across the world in the 1950s and 1960s interested politicians even more in bringing international sport to their cities. States hosting events such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup used global media coverage as part of their public diplomacy efforts to portray a specific image of their country to the world.<sup>7</sup> Brandt and West German sport leaders put forward the 1968 Berlin bid in this context. Sport diplomacy expanded after 1945 as both Cold War camps increasingly used sport diplomacy to demonstrate their superiority while other states attempted to promote an alternative to the bipolar world through sport.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Karten Lippmann, '...und für die Ehre unserer Nation(en)': Olympische Deutschlandpolitik zwischen 1960 und 1968 (Hildesheim: Arete Verlag, 2017), 58–120.

<sup>3</sup> Noel D. Cary, 'Olympics in Divided Berlin? Popular Culture and Political Imagination at the Cold War Frontier', *Cold War History*, 11, 3 (2011), 291–316.

<sup>4</sup> Martin H. Geyer, 'On the Road to a German "Postnationalism"? Athletic Competition between the Two German States in the Era of Konrad Adenauer', *German Politics and Society*, 25, 2 (2007), 162.

<sup>5</sup> Peter Beck, 'Conclusion: "Good Kicking" Is Not Only "Good Politics" but Also "Good Diplomacy"', in Heather L. Dichter, ed., *Soccer Diplomacy: International Relations and Football Since 1914* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2020), 221–50; Heather L. Dichter, 'The Diplomatic Turn: The New Relationship Between Sport and Politics', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 38, 2–3 (2021), 247–63.

<sup>6</sup> Mark Dyreson and Matthew Llewellyn, 'Los Angeles is the Olympic City: Legacies of the 1932 and 1984 Olympic Games', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 25, 14 (2008), 1991–2018; Graeme Davison, 'Welcoming the World: The 1956 Olympic Games and the Re-presentation of Melbourne', *Australian Historical Studies*, 27, 109 (1997), 64–76; Sandra Collins, 'East Asian Olympic Desires: Identity on the Global Stage in the 1964 Tokyo, 1988 Seoul and 2008 Beijing Games', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 28, 16 (2011), 2240–60.

<sup>7</sup> Brenda Elsey, '"Because We Have Nothing": The 1962 World Cup and Cold War Politics in Chile', in Dichter, ed., *Soccer Diplomacy*, 94–115; Cesar R. Torres, 'Peronism, International Sport, and Diplomacy', in Heather L. Dichter and Andrew L. Johns, eds., *Diplomatic Games: Sport, Statecraft, and International Relations Since 1945* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), 151–82; Robert Edelman, 'Moscow 1980: Stalinism or Good, Clean Fun?', in Alan Tomlinson and Christopher Young, eds., *National Identity and Global Sports Events: Culture, Politics, and Spectacle in the Olympics and the Football World Cup* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 149–61.

<sup>8</sup> Ashley Brown, 'Swinging for the State Department: American Women Tennis Players in Diplomatic Goodwill Tours, 1941–59', *Journal of Sport History*, 42, 3 (2015), 289–309; Jenifer Parks, 'Welcoming the "Third World": Soviet Sports

For the two German states, sport became one of the most contested areas. The IOC demanded in the 1950s and 1960s that the two states compete on a single Olympic team.<sup>9</sup> In sports which allowed two separate German teams to compete, NATO supported its German member and prevented East German national teams from entering their countries for world and European championships. The multilateral organisation discussed this problem at length with extensive reports from West Germany about its position and actions.<sup>10</sup> Within this highly charged arena the idea of a joint Berlin Olympic bid thus concerned far more people than East and West German politicians and sport leaders and encompassed more issues than the typical sport diplomacy of mega-event bids, when winning the right to host and the subsequent public diplomacy are the standard goals.

The NATO response to the Berlin bid is one of the rare instances where individuals took direct action to undermine another city's efforts.<sup>11</sup> Cities wanting to host the Olympics undertake whatever steps they deem necessary – often in violation of IOC rules – to win the Olympic Games.<sup>12</sup> However, in 1968 it was not candidate cities working against Berlin but multiple foreign ministries and their diplomats. These political actors viewed the idea of a joint Berlin Olympic bid as a challenge to their Cold War position. The four states which had occupied Germany after the Second World War – and not the Germans – technically remained in control of Berlin even after the occupation ended in 1949. West Berlin had been a problem for the Soviet Union and East Germany, and they frequently tried to limit Western access.<sup>13</sup> The Americans, British and French countered these efforts to maintain their position in the city, which included preventing the Olympic Games across both parts of the city from happening. For the United States and France, the Berlin bid was also a threat to their own domestic candidates – although both countries voiced the political reasons around the Allies' position in Berlin and the city's status in meetings instead of framing their concerns in national self-interested terms about protecting their own cities' bids. Diplomats in Bonn, Berlin and back in their own capitals worked quietly (and largely unsuccessfully) to dissuade West Germany from putting forward plans for an Olympic Games in Berlin.

Recognising the hostility to the Berlin bid, Mayor Brandt, the West Berlin Senat (the West Berlin city government) and even West Germany's Foreign Ministry (*Auswärtiges Amt*) largely kept their actions a secret from their closest allies. Each time the Americans, British and French learned of any steps taken for a Berlin bid, they tried to persuade the West German and West Berlin governments against such action. These diplomatic efforts reveal the significance which foreign ministries have long attributed to international sport and its wider implications, as a joint Berlin bid had the potential to challenge the four-power control of Berlin. From a sporting perspective, the tripartite actions against the Berlin bid were a dramatic break with precedent as

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Diplomacy, Developing Nations and the Olympic Games', in Dichter and Johns, eds., *Diplomatic Games*, 85–114; Elsey, "Because We Have Nothing"; Rusli Lutan and Fan Hong, 'The Politicization of Sport: GANEFO – A Case Study', *Sport in Society*, 8, 3 (2005), 425–39; Russell Field, 'Re-Entering the Sporting World: China's Sponsorship of the 1963 Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFO)', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 31, 15 (2014), 1852–67.

<sup>9</sup> Uta A. Balbier, *Kalter Krieg auf der Aschenbahn: der deutsch-deutsche Sport, 1950–1972: eine politische Geschichte* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 2007).

<sup>10</sup> Heather L. Dichter, *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games: International Sport's Cold War Battle with NATO* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2021).

<sup>11</sup> The anti-Olympic efforts in recent decades have largely arisen from local activists, although this movement has developed transnational links. Helen Jefferson Lenskyj, *Inside the Olympic Industry: Power, Politics, and Activism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000); Chris Dempsey and Andrew Zimbalist, *No Boston Olympics: How and Why Smart Cities Are Passing on the Torch* (Lebanon, NH: ForeEdge, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Wenn, Robert Barney, and Scott Martyn, *Tarnished Rings: The International Olympic Committee and the Salt Lake City Bid Scandal* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011); Heather L. Dichter, 'Corruption in the 1960s?: Rethinking the Origins of Unethical Olympic Bidding Tactics', *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 33, 6–7 (2016), 666–82.

<sup>13</sup> Daniel F. Harrington, *Berlin on the Brink: The Blockade, the Airlift, and the Early Cold War* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2012); Richard D. Williamson, *First Steps Toward Détente: American Diplomacy in the Berlin Crisis, 1958–1963* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012); Patrick Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall: East Germany and the Frontiers of Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

foreign governments sought to actively end another country's Olympic aspirations because of both the broader political ramifications and their own national self-interest in hosting the same event. While the Americans, British and French had several reasons to oppose an Olympic Games in both parts of Berlin, they framed their arguments to each other and, most importantly, to their West German colleagues, around West Germany and West Berlin's interests, all while keeping their own positions in Berlin in mind (along with American and French desires to host the Olympic Games themselves).

### The Berlin Proposal and Allied Discouragement

German participation in international sport was complicated after the Second World War. West Germany resumed Germany's place within the IOC and the international federations which governed each sport.<sup>14</sup> East Germany, with the support of the communist bloc, sought separate recognition within all of the sport governing bodies but did not fully achieve that goal until the end of the 1960s. While some international federations separately admitted East Germany, many bodies, including the IOC, only granted it provisional recognition. The two German states thus had to organise a single combined team for the Olympic Games.<sup>15</sup> The Bonn government's support of a joint Berlin bid for the Olympic Games appeared to contradict its policy of not recognising East Germany. This idea instead actually aligned with the overarching concept that West Germany, as the only democratically elected German government, represented all Germans – including those living in the East. Included within Berlin's special status of remaining legally under control of the four occupation powers was the continued presence of the Allied Travel Office, the American, British and French entity in West Berlin which authorised East German travel to Western states. Organising the Olympic Games across both parts of divided Berlin would, like the formation of the all-German team that competed in 1956 and 1960, reinforce this point. West Germany, which knew the interest its NATO colleagues had regarding East German sport, kept its support of this joint Berlin bid idea a secret from its alliance partners, who in turn actively discouraged this proposal when they learned about it.

The government in Bonn first considered a Berlin Olympics in January 1963 after Willi Daume, the leading West German sport official and an IOC member, had sought the advice of the Foreign Ministry. Daume initially raised the idea of a joint Berlin Olympic bid in conversation with Avery Brundage, the American president of the IOC, to gauge his interest. Brundage did not discount this possibility, prompting Daume to pursue it with appropriate government officials in Berlin and Bonn.<sup>16</sup> After an internal discussion, the Foreign Ministry concluded 'that the advantages could presently outweigh the disadvantages, the main disadvantage being that East Berlin could end up not cooperating, and could result in the failure of the proposal'.<sup>17</sup> The Foreign Ministry approached this idea positively, particularly since the majority of the events would take place at West Berlin venues, with many centred around the Olympic Stadium; a few events, such as rowing, would be in East Berlin. State Secretary Rolf Otto Lahr thus informed Daume that the Foreign Ministry did not oppose him holding additional discussions with Brundage.<sup>18</sup>

The Foreign Ministry then floated the idea to its American, British and French colleagues in Bonn at their regular quadripartite meeting. At these meetings the four states discussed important issues: East German efforts to establish formal diplomatic or commercial relations with other states, Live

<sup>14</sup> Heather L. Dichter, 'Sporting Relations: Diplomacy, Small States, and Germany's Postwar Return to International Sport', *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 27, 2 (2016), 340–59.

<sup>15</sup> Balbier, *Kalter Krieg*; Tobius Blasius, *Olympische Bewegung, Kalter Krieg und Deutschlandpolitik 1949–1972* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2001).

<sup>16</sup> Lahr, Betr.: Ort der Olympiade 1968, 4 Jan. 1963, Politisches Archiv des Auswärtiges Amt, Berlin, Germany (PAAdAA), B 2/156; Cary, 'Olympics in Divided Berlin', 300.

<sup>17</sup> Lahr, Betr.: Ort der Olympiade 1968, 4 Jan. 1963, PAAdAA, B 2/156.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

Oak (the secret plans for how to respond to an invasion of West Berlin) and access to Berlin. At the 16 January meeting German sport arose with a report on the status of the all-German team for the 1964 Olympics, whose negotiations had immediately stopped with the appearance of the Berlin Wall but were slowly progressing again.<sup>19</sup> The German representative followed that update by informally mentioning the joint Berlin Olympic bid, seeking the views of the three embassies and their governments. The Foreign Ministry representative mentioned that this idea had originated with Daume and that the plans had not been thought out in much detail yet. As the British reported back to London, the German representative felt ‘the chances of this coming off were extremely small but he seemed to think that there might be some propaganda advantage in making the proposal. If by any chance it was accepted, the difficulties would be enormous but at least a hole would be punched in the wall’.<sup>20</sup> The German representative also stated that the three embassies’ views would factor into the West German response. This claim was not entirely accurate since the Foreign Ministry had already told Daume it thought the idea had merit.

West Germany’s allies were not pleased with this proposal, from both a logistical standpoint and for American and French self-interests in organising the Olympics themselves. The British embassy saw the propaganda value of a Berlin bid, particularly as the chances of the East Germans agreeing to a joint Olympic bid seemed ‘very remote’.<sup>21</sup> It recognised the limited time to prepare a bid would present a challenge, but two other concerns perhaps warranted greater consideration by the British Foreign Office. They could be drawn into the situation through the Allied Travel Office if the East Germans reacted to the joint Berlin Olympic proposal ‘by insisting as a quid-pro-quo on a relaxation of the [travel] restrictions on sportsmen’. Additionally, from a logistical standpoint, the British ‘would be in an awkward situation since a number of events would presumably have to be conducted in or near’ their headquarters. The Olympic Stadium fell under British control in 1945 and its military continued to use the grounds; the use of these venues would threaten the British position in Berlin.<sup>22</sup> The French questioned a joint Berlin bid because it faced ‘serious political objections’.<sup>23</sup> In particular the West Berlin government could not avoid working directly with the East German authorities over issues such as financial contributions and using stadiums in both parts of the city. The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Ministère des Affaires Étrangères*; MAE) also largely dismissed Berlin’s bid by noting that cities must submit their intention to bid for the Olympics six years in advance, making a Berlin bid – in 1963 for 1968 – ineligible.<sup>24</sup> All of these reasons made West Germany’s allies discourage this idea.

The three embassies in Bonn expressed their views at the next quadripartite meeting in late January. The French representative reiterated the MAE’s reservations. Instead of admitting the government’s initial support of the Berlin bid, the Foreign Ministry representative merely took note of those comments.<sup>25</sup> The Americans remained quiet in front of the Germans, although at the preceding tripartite meeting they, too, had opposed the idea.<sup>26</sup> The Berlin bid arose at the next quadripartite meeting in mid-February when the American representative attempted to clarify the date by which a city could apply to the IOC to host the Olympics, potentially allowing Berlin’s bid. The French, however, stated that this point did not change their position ‘on the inadvisability of accepting Berlin’s candidature for the 1968 Games’. The German representative again took note of these comments and ‘assured the group that the responsible German bodies were fully aware of the difficulties in raising such an

<sup>19</sup> Dichter, *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games*, 40–3.

<sup>20</sup> Letter, J. C. C. Bennett, Bonn, to J. S. Whitehead, Foreign Office, 21 Jan. 1963, The National Archives, London (TNA), FO 371/169325.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Telegram 708.09, Diplomatie p.o. J. de Beaumarchais to Bonn, 21 Jan. 1963, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de La Courneuve, Paris (CADC), 179QQ/75.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Compte rendu de la reunion quadripartite*, 30 Jan. 1963, CADC, 178QQ/1719.

<sup>26</sup> Letter, J. C. C. Bennett, Bonn to J. S. Whitehead, Foreign Office, 1 Feb. 1963, TNA, FO 371/169325.

undertaking.<sup>27</sup> The allies recognised the threat to their position in Berlin, both geographically with respect to venues and practically regarding their role and actions in the city, and they advocated against this plan on these reasons (along with a basic Olympic timeline violation).

With the idea of a Berlin bid perhaps gaining more traction, the US State Department and British Foreign Office investigated the issue further with their representatives in Bonn and Berlin. The political department representative at the British mission in Berlin shared his views on the viability of a bid based on his experiences in the city. Noting that the East German regime would have to choose between killing the Olympic idea or taking over the plans, the possibilities were not as clear-cut as a propaganda exercise as it might seem at first glance. If the East Germans simply turned down the joint Berlin Olympic bid proposal, it 'would be a propaganda defeat for them and would take some of the wind out of their own propaganda about discrimination against DDR sportsmen'.<sup>28</sup> He therefore felt it was more likely that the East Germans would take over the proposal and attempt to control all aspects of the bid and, should the IOC select Berlin as the host, much of the organisation itself. Because the East Germans continued to claim that West Berlin was 'on DDR territory', the East Germans would likely use that rationale with the IOC to insist that they should conduct the negotiations and organising of the games, wresting it from Brandt and West Berlin. The British recognised that some events might take place outside Berlin (the 1936 Berlin Olympic sailing events had been in Kiel), which might prompt East Germany to shift 'the concept of "the Olympic Games within the whole of Berlin" to the concept of "the Olympic Games on DDR territory, including some events in West Berlin"'.<sup>29</sup> Although the diplomat did not explicitly reference Berlin's special status, his statement hinted at the potential challenges to the three Western Allied states' position in Berlin. A joint bid would also necessitate Brandt's working with official East German representatives. If he refused to do so, the East Germans might in the end gain the upper hand with propaganda because they could then 'throw the blame for wrecking the project back on to him'.<sup>30</sup> Brandt had recently refused to negotiate with the East German government over travel passes to East Berlin, making this point particularly acute.<sup>31</sup> Without any sporting self-interest in the matter, the British view from Berlin focused entirely on those challenges likely to arise which would directly affect them.

Although its representatives in Bonn and Berlin initially supported the Berlin bid for its propaganda value, the British Foreign Office ultimately decided a Berlin Olympics was not a good idea. In fact, it judged the beneficial propaganda for East Germany as precisely the reasons not to support the bid. After speaking with the Marquess of Exeter, an IOC vice president and the president of the international federation for track and field, the Foreign Office informed its embassy in Bonn that 'we have been coming under increasingly pressure' from international sport leaders 'to keep politics (and in particular [travel] restrictions) out of sport. We have been able to defend this on the grounds that the restrictions are not directed solely at sport. But the idea of holding the Olympic Games in Berlin would inevitably be considered as a calculated political move'.<sup>32</sup> Both Cold War blocs had claimed the other had been bringing politics into sport, and with NATO's travel ban on East German national teams, the British were acutely aware of the West's precarious position within international sport. The Foreign Office wanted to prevent a further weakening of the West's influence within international sport to the benefit of the communist bloc. British diplomats were therefore to discourage the Berlin bid.

<sup>27</sup> *Compte rendu de la reunion quadripartite*, 13 Feb. 1963, CADC, 178QO/1719; Telegram 1318, Margerie, Bonn to Diplomatie Paris, 15 Feb. 1963, CADC, 179QO/75; Letter, J. C. C. Bennett, Bonn to J. S. Whitehead, Foreign Office, 14 Feb. 1963, TNA, FO 371/169325.

<sup>28</sup> Letter, H. A. J. Staples, Berlin to J. C. C. Bennett, Bonn, 11 Feb. 1963, TNA, FO 371/169325.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Letter, A. L. Southern, Berlin to J. C. C. Bennett, Bonn, 18 Feb. 1963, TNA, FO 371/169325.

<sup>32</sup> Letter, J. S. Whitehead, Foreign Office to J. C. C. Bennett, Bonn, 15 Feb. 1963, TNA, FO 371/169325; Letter, J. S. Whitehead to Marquess of Exeter, 9 Jan. 1963, 11 Jan. 1963, TNA, FO 371/169325; Letter, Marquess of Exeter to J. S. Whitehead, 11 Jan. 1963, TNA, FO 371/169325; Letter, Marquess of Exeter to J. S. Whitehead, 14 Feb. 1963, TNA, FO 371/169325.

The State Department undertook similar consultations. The diplomats in Bonn stated that 'it seems likely any effort to get joint agreed proposal would be fraught with political obstacles and have almost no chance of success'.<sup>33</sup> If some individuals wanted to pursue a joint Berlin bid 'merely to derive propaganda advantages from East German manipulation of unacceptable political demands', the embassy felt that course of action seemed 'scarcely worth [the] effort'.<sup>34</sup> For a Berlin bid to work, the East Germans would have to be cooperative and prepared to open the Berlin Wall to 'thousands upon thousands of visitors and to teams of many nations, which in light [of] recent history and current situation is a fully unjustifiable assumption'.<sup>35</sup> The American embassy recommended strongly discouraging any Berlin bid.<sup>36</sup> The State Department concurred with its embassy's views and reiterated that a 'United States city will be a strong contender' as the 1968 Olympic host, revealing the combination of Cold War politics and national self-interest in this stance.<sup>37</sup> The Americans thus saw the challenges of gaining propaganda from both an all-Berlin Olympic Games and from working with East Germany to organise such an event, while also wanting to protect the American candidate cities for the Summer and Winter Olympic Games.

With their views in line, the tripartite powers met to coordinate their response regarding the Berlin bid. After assessing the possibilities and challenges, the three states concluded that: 'It is generally undesirable to use the Olympic Games as a pawn in the Berlin chess game'.<sup>38</sup> A Berlin bid 'would create a series of extremely awkward problems' with respect to Berlin's status, such as 'West Berlin authorities engaging in negotiations with representatives of the East German Government'.<sup>39</sup> Protecting Berlin's special status and ensuring East Germany did not have another way of claiming West Berlin fell on East German territory was important for the tripartite powers. The logistics of organising a large international sporting event, which required local, regional and national support in a normal context, would, in the case of an Olympics across both parts of Berlin, threaten West Berlin itself, along with the American, British and French role in the city. Their position in Berlin and the issue of travel in and out of Berlin (and East Germany) were intimately intertwined, making a joint Berlin Olympic Games a problem for the tripartite powers. They agreed that should any official within the Berlin Senat promote this bid, an 'Allied representative should at once seek to discourage such action'.<sup>40</sup>

They did indeed do so at the next quadripartite meeting in late February, when both the British and Americans stated outright their governments did not approve of a Berlin bid. The German representative again noted their views but now stressed that 'Olympic organisations were private associations and that the Federal Government could only act on them through persuasion'.<sup>41</sup> The British felt that the German representative, without actually saying so, 'gave the impression that the *Auswärtiges Amt* sympathised with the objections' they had expressed. He concluded his report to London by stating: 'I doubt if we shall hear much more of the idea'.<sup>42</sup> The German statement, of course, was misleading. Willi Daume had explicitly approached the Foreign Ministry two months prior to ascertain its support for a Berlin bid, which it had granted. Various levels within the federal government wanting to discourage a Berlin bid could have withheld tacit consent and instructed

<sup>33</sup> Telegram 2147, Morris, Bonn to Secretary of State, 19 Feb. 1963, National Archives, College Park, Maryland, USA (NA), Record Group (RG) 59, Central Foreign Policy Files (CFPF) 1963, EDU 15, Box 3240.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Telegram 1948, Rusk, Department of State to American Embassy Bonn, 20 Feb. 1963, NA, RG 59, CFPF 1963, EDU 15, Box 3240.

<sup>38</sup> Letter, A. L. Southern, Berlin to J. C. C. Bennett, Bonn, 18 Feb. 1963, TNA, FO 371/169325.

<sup>39</sup> Letter, J. C. C. Bennett, Bonn to J. S. Whitehead, Foreign Office, 14 Feb. 1963, TNA, FO 371/169325.

<sup>40</sup> Telegram 903, Lightner, Berlin to Secretary of State, 21 Feb. 1963, NA, RG 59, CFPF 1963, EDU 15, Box 3240.

<sup>41</sup> Compte rendu de la reunion quadripartite, 27 Feb. 1963, CADC, 178QO/1719.

<sup>42</sup> Letter, J. C. C. Bennett, Bonn to J. S. Whitehead, Foreign Office, 1 Mar. 1963, TNA, FO 371/169325.

Daume to stop these efforts.<sup>43</sup> Instead, the discussion within the Foreign Ministry had concluded a Berlin bid would have positive merits.

### Deceiving Germany's Allies

The tripartite states believed that the Berlin Olympic bid had not progressed beyond the initial idea until the US mission reported on 23 March that the Senat was considering the Olympic proposal. In reality the Senat had secretly approved the Berlin bid four days earlier.<sup>44</sup> The representatives from the three missions in Berlin, in their regular meeting, assigned the French the task of discouraging the Senat from moving forward, although it was obviously too late.<sup>45</sup> When the French officer met with a Senat representative, the latter commented that the Senat 'would not act without first discussing with Bonn and Allies'.<sup>46</sup> The Senat representative stated that the federal government had raised several questions to which the Senat had sent responses, and the initiative now lay with the federal government.<sup>47</sup> Contrary to the impression the Foreign Ministry had given the tripartite representatives, the idea of a joint Berlin Olympic Games had been progressing, gaining government support within West Berlin and the federal government in Bonn – both of whom tried to keep these efforts secret from their closest allies. The official German correspondence with the IOC used the discourse of apolitical sport to frame the value of the joint Berlin idea. Once the Americans, British and French diplomats learned of the continued plans, they resumed their pressure on the West German government against the bid.

The day before the Senat representative shared these details with the French mission in Berlin, Mayor Willy Brandt had sent the letter offering Berlin's candidacy for the 1968 Summer Olympics to IOC chancellor Otto Mayer, the top staff member who ran the IOC's headquarters in Lausanne. Writing on behalf of the Senat, Brandt invited the Olympics to be held in Berlin. He also stated that 'the authorities of East Berlin – after respective negotiations of the two German National Olympic Committees – will be ready to give their agreement to this project'.<sup>48</sup> Brandt included in his letter a 'formal declaration that all participants and visitors of the Olympic Games can go to West Berlin without any impediment'.<sup>49</sup> West German policy permitted East German athletes to travel there, particularly when holding trials for the all-German Olympic teams. Brandt's authorisation added an important dimension because the IOC had demanded a travel guarantee from all of the candidate cities, which had been particularly difficult for the cities from NATO states to provide.<sup>50</sup>

Both Brandt and Daume recognised the difficulty of hosting the Olympics in Berlin, so Brandt marked his letter strictly confidential. Daume's accompanying letter to Mayer emphasised his previous discussions with Brundage regarding a Berlin bid. Daume noted that Brundage shared the opinion that hosting the Olympic Games across both East and West Berlin would be a great success in promoting the IOC's mission and that it 'would certainly help support the elimination of political difficulties from international sport'.<sup>51</sup> In a second letter sent that same day to Mayer, Daume further elaborated on the

<sup>43</sup> Cary notes reservations held by Chancellor Adenauer and the Minister for All-German Affairs, Rainer Barzel, but their actions – or, really, inaction – only delayed or stalled Brandt's efforts regarding the Berlin Olympic bid and did not directly seek to end them. Cary, 'Olympics in Divided Berlin?', 300–1.

<sup>44</sup> Telegram 1009, Lightner, Berlin to Secretary of State, 23 Mar. 1963, NA, RG 59, CFPF 1963, EDU 15, Box 3240; Cary, 'Olympics in Divided Berlin?', 301.

<sup>45</sup> Telegram 1009, Lightner, Berlin to Secretary of State, 23 Mar. 1963, NA, RG 59, CFPF 1963, EDU 15, Box 3240.

<sup>46</sup> Telegram 1043, Lightner, Berlin to Secretary of State, 2 Apr. 1963, NA, RG 59, CFPF 1963, EDU 15, Box 3240.

<sup>47</sup> Telegram 942–944, Le Nail, Berlin to Ambafrance Bonn, 28 Mar. 1963, CADC, 179QO/75.

<sup>48</sup> Letter, Willy Brandt to Otto Mayer, 27 Mar. 1963, Olympic Studies Centre (OSC), Lausanne, Switzerland, C-J04-1968\_001/Villes candidates – Berlin.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Circular Letter No. 219, To the Cities candidate to the organisation of the Games of the XIXth Olympiad in 1968 and to the Xth Olympic Winter Olympic Games 1968, 14 Mar. 1963, OSC, C-J04-1968/001 – Villes candidates; Dichter, *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games*, 87–143.

<sup>51</sup> Letter, Willi Daume to Otto Mayer, 29 Mar. 1963, OSC, C-J04-1968\_001/Villes candidates – Berlin.



Berlin bid, noting that ‘Brundage was very excited about the plan and I share his view that it does not matter if the application will succeed’.<sup>52</sup> Brundage’s support could only go so far in making this idea a reality as the entire IOC selected the host city by secret ballot. In acknowledging Berlin’s application, Mayer readily agreed to the requests for absolute secrecy.<sup>53</sup>

Brandt sang a different tune when he met with the tripartite missions in Berlin, confirming he had already informed the IOC of the city’s Olympic aspirations.<sup>54</sup> In contrast to the letters to the IOC, Brandt told Germany’s allies that the impetus for the Berlin bid came from the IOC. Brandt stated that while he had given the favourable reply in principle, in reality he personally was not happy because it seemed impossible for the East Germans to accept a Berlin bid that among its multiple problematic elements required the free movement of people.<sup>55</sup> However, Brandt noted, West Berlin ‘must be prepared [to] say it could and would fulfill conditions’.<sup>56</sup> Daume’s second letter to Mayer and Brandt’s admission to the tripartite powers made the Berlin bid appear to be a propaganda stunt – intended not to promote a city on the global stage but instead to embarrass East Germany. For West Berlin and West Germany to benefit from these plans as a propaganda stunt, though, the public would need to know about them. Typically, newspapers cover every action taken by a bid committee to generate maximum exposure to help win the IOC vote.<sup>57</sup> Yet, by April 1963 no media had reported on these plans. The secrecy surrounding Berlin’s bid, combined with the deceptive statements provided to the tripartite powers by the Senat, suggest that the Berlin bid was more than simply a propaganda ploy and was part of a calculated plan. The government entities supporting the bid had in fact been discussing the ramifications of actually winning the right to host the Olympics, all while purposely not informing their closest political allies.

Brandt and Daume’s actions alarmed the tripartite powers. The State Department responded to this report about Brandt’s comments by reiterating that its diplomats should continue to discourage Berlin’s Olympic candidacy.<sup>58</sup> Representatives from the three embassies in Bonn met on 5 April to discuss the Berlin bid and then again the next day at the regular quadripartite meeting. The tripartite officials agreed the Berlin Olympic idea would never receive support from East German officials and concluded the proposal was Brandt’s propaganda stunt.<sup>59</sup> At the quadripartite meeting the Foreign Ministry representative placed the decision to move ahead with the bid on the Senat. Even though the Foreign Ministry had relayed the allies’ concerns to the interior ministry and, through it, to the sport organisations, the ‘Senat and sports organizations had stuck to their original intention and had, through Brandt, applied for Berlin as 1968 Olympic site prior to April 1’.<sup>60</sup> The Foreign Ministry official admitted there was little more his ministry could do, but he, too, doubted the East Germans would support the bid.<sup>61</sup> The issue appeared to have died down. The German representative agreed to convey the tripartite reservations to the Ministry of the Interior again, and the three states hoped that the lack of support from the East Germans would, ultimately, kill the idea.

Instead, the Berlin bid moved forward as Daume called his East German counterparts on 9 April to discuss the proposal. Daume shared the idea of the Olympics across Berlin but did not inform them how advanced the bid actually was.<sup>62</sup> Just as the Foreign Ministry and Brandt had not been entirely

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Letter, Otto Mayer to Willy Brandt, 1 Apr. 1963, OSC, C-J04-1968\_001/Villes candidates – Berlin; *ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Telegram 1043, Lightner, Berlin to Secretary of State, 2 Apr. 1963, NA, RG 59, CFPF 1963, EDU 15, Box 3240.

<sup>55</sup> Telegram 960/961, Le Nail, Berlin to Ambafrance Bonn, 30 Mar. 1963, CADC, 179QO/75.

<sup>56</sup> Telegram 1043, Lightner, Berlin to Secretary of State, 2 Apr. 1963, NA, RG 59, CFPF 1963, EDU 15, Box 3240.

<sup>57</sup> Dichter, ‘Corruption in the 1960s?’, Clare Mackay, ‘“Back the Bid”: The London Olympic Bid Committee and the Sun Newspaper’, *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 36, 4 (2012), 410–21.

<sup>58</sup> Telegram 2378, Ball, Department of State to Amembassy Bonn, 3 Apr. 1963, NA, RG 59, CFPF 1963, EDU 15, Box 3240.

<sup>59</sup> Telegram 2686, Dowling, Bonn to Secretary of State, 8 Apr. 1963, NA, RG 59, CFPF 1963, EDU 15, Box 3240.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*; Compte rendu de la reunion quadripartite, 6 Apr. 1963, CADC, 178QO/1719.

<sup>61</sup> Telegram 2686, Dowling, Bonn to Secretary of State, 8 Apr. 1963, NA, RG 59, CFPF 1963, EDU 15, Box 3240; Compte rendu de la reunion quadripartite, 6 Apr. 1963, CADC, 178QO/1719; Letter, J. L. Bullard, Bonn to J. S. Whitehead, Foreign Office, 9 Apr. 1963, TNA, FO 371/169325.

<sup>62</sup> Telefongespräch am 9.4.1963 mit Willi Daume, 9 Apr. 1963, Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde (BAB), Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO), DR 510/105.

forthcoming to the tripartite powers, Daume had not provided all of the facts to his East German counterparts – namely that Brandt had already sent a letter to the IOC offering Berlin as a candidate for the 1968 Olympics. Brandt, the West Berlin Senat and Daume had explicitly kept their actions a secret to prevent an early end to the bid because of a lack of support from other parties.

One month later the tripartite powers learned the extent of West Berlin's efforts. A Senat member shared with the tripartite representatives the general content of Brandt's letter to the IOC declaring the interest in hosting the 1968 Olympics (but not the actual letter itself). The Senat felt that 'to hold the Olympic Games in All-Berlin would be a heaven sent opportunity to open up the wall and revive contacts between East and West'. In reporting on this conversation, the British commented that the Senat representative 'could not see how there could be any political objection on the Western side to this and objections from the East would be of publicity value to the West'.<sup>63</sup> It was clear to the Americans, French and British that the West Germans – or at least the West Berlin government – had forged ahead with the Olympic proposal against the wishes of the country's closest allies. Brandt and the West Berlin Senat remained convinced of the benefits of a joint Berlin Olympic bid, or at least of the propaganda value of this idea.

Each time the tripartite powers learned that the Berlin bid had progressed they repeatedly made it clear that they did not support this plan and actively encouraged the Germans to cease these efforts. An Olympic Games in divided Berlin faced numerous logistical challenges, and the late submission and lack of concrete plans by mid-1963 should have ended the city's chances. The tripartite powers saw the many ways in which a joint Berlin bid – and the Olympic Games, should the IOC select the city as the host – could turn into a political disaster for West Germany. The East Germans would likely attempt to take control of the project and blame West Germany for any problems with its organisation. East German actions also had the potential to challenge the American, British and French position in Berlin. The travel aspect in particular concerned the tripartite powers because of their continued oversight in this area as a legacy from the postwar occupation, and the concurrent debates within NATO about travel restrictions, especially for athletes, would likely explode within the alliance should Berlin be selected to host the Olympic Games. Furthermore, although the Americans and French did not admit it to their allies, they also wanted to prevent Berlin's candidature because it would be another competitor against Detroit and Lyon. The tripartite powers thus worked – for self-interested, geopolitical and logistical reasons – against the Berlin Olympic bid.

### Media Breaks the Berlin Bid Story

For all of the supposed benefits and strengths of a joint Berlin Olympics, the West Germans nonetheless sought to keep their actions quiet – from the tripartite powers, the East German sport officials and the public at large – until German media broke the story on 20–21 May, which global media then reported.<sup>64</sup> Many people knew about the joint Berlin bid: the Berlin Senat, several departments within the West German government, West German sport leaders, the tripartite foreign ministries, Avery Brundage and Otto Mayer. Yet, for almost five months this story remained hidden from the public.<sup>65</sup> Once the world learned about the idea of a joint Berlin Olympic Games, the tripartite powers continued to push West Germany to force the withdrawal of Berlin's candidature but without publicly appearing to do so because the media viewed the joint Olympic bid as a way to overcome Cold War politics and help promote improved relations between the two German states.

The German press first published the stories announcing the Berlin bid, which caught the American, British and French in missions in Berlin off-guard. Their press officers declined to

<sup>63</sup> Letter, A. L. Southern, Berlin to J. L. Bullard, Bonn, 5 May 1963, TNA, FO 371/169325.

<sup>64</sup> Cary, 'Olympics in Divided Berlin?', 301.

<sup>65</sup> Noel Cary noted the many different entities within Germany which knew about the bid, including several newspaper editors sworn to secrecy. Cary suggests the eventual leak of the bid 'may have been an inadvertent by-product' of West German sport leaders' efforts to ensure support from their own government. Cary, 'Olympics in Divided Berlin?', 301.

comment to German journalists.<sup>66</sup> Unlike the tripartite missions, IOC president Avery Brundage had no problem sharing his thoughts. The Associated Press story which both the *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* ran quoted Brundage at length about a joint Berlin Olympic Games: 'This would be a great triumph for amateur sports and the Olympic movement, and it would put political wrangling to shame'. They also quoted the IOC chancellor, who spoke positively about the idea of a Berlin bid, noting that 'It would be a victory of sport over politics'.<sup>67</sup> Both men welcomed the opportunity to promote the belief that sport and politics should remain separate – even though in reality sport and politics had never been separate.

Media in the other NATO countries with cities bidding for the 1968 Olympics considered the impact of Berlin's bid on their own candidacies. In France the coverage emphasised the fact that both Berlin and Vienna were now candidates for the Summer Olympics, bringing the total number of cities in the running to six.<sup>68</sup> *Le Progrès*, Lyon's major newspaper, splashed the story atop the sport section: 'SURPRISE: Vienna and Berlin candidates for the organisation of the 1968 Olympic Games'.<sup>69</sup> Lyon was more concerned that with Vienna's previous renunciation of its bid the Austrian IOC members had promised their votes to the French city, and the paper wondered how Vienna's renewed candidacy would affect Lyon's chances. *Aftenposten*, Norway's leading daily newspaper, published a lengthy article from their correspondent in Bonn on the front page. The story began: 'An attempt to let "sport win over policy" in the Berlin question became public Tuesday'. The Norwegian journalist was far less optimistic about this possibility, noting that both the Berlin Senat and Otto Mayer emphasised the East Germans had yet to agree to a joint Berlin bid, which would be necessary for it to move forward.<sup>70</sup> Norway's sports-only paper, *Sportsmanden*, likewise emphasised the role of sport in accomplishing what politicians had thus far failed to do. *Sportsmanden* carried the full Associated Press story on the Berlin bid and then added a five-paragraph commentary which began: 'Naturally, it is a brilliant proposal, and a proposal that opens perspectives beyond [what] the politicians usually have an eye for'. The paper noted that Berlin has first-class sport facilities and expert organisers. *Sportsmanden* acknowledged the challenge of this proposal actually working but placed hope in the role of sport in 'demolishing the shameful wall in the old capital'. Indeed, the paper believed that if Berlin really did proceed with its bid, the rest of the candidate cities would not have the slightest chance to catch up.<sup>71</sup>

Norway only had a candidate for the 1968 Winter Olympics, but the Berlin bid interested the country's media and diplomats. The Norwegian ambassador in Bonn sent a lengthy report back to Oslo regarding the Berlin bid, its prospects and the German media coverage. He noted that Brundage had announced his support of Berlin's candidacy and that 'it is possible' that the IOC could award the games to Berlin, but that Berlin's chances were 'very small'. The political difficulties of bringing the Olympics to divided Berlin were obvious, he commented, which is 'apparently the reason why the federal government has so far chosen to remain cautious and has refused to comment on the case' which had 'been treated with the utmost discretion'.<sup>72</sup> The ambassador merely reported on the situation, and the Norwegian foreign ministry did not instruct him to take any action.

<sup>66</sup> Telegram 1175, Hulick, Berlin to Secretary of State, 22 May 1963, NA, RG 59, CFPF 1963, EDU 15, Box 3240.

<sup>67</sup> 'Berlin a Candidate to Stage 1968 Olympics If East German Officials Agree', *New York Times*, 22 May 1963, 68; 'Plan to Award Olympics to Berlin Draws Support', *Los Angeles Times*, 22 May 1963, B2.

<sup>68</sup> 'Berlin-Ouest candidat l'organisation des Jeux Olympiques', *Le Monde*, 23 May 1963, 19. Vienna had been one of four cities that had bid for the 1964 Summer Games. While the city had initially expressed an interest in bidding for the 1968 Games shortly after losing the 1959 vote, the result of the November 1962 election, which left a caretaker government until late March 1963, left Vienna unable to provide the necessary letter of support from the government for its bid until late May. Letter, Hans Mandel to Otto Mayer, 10 Dec. 1960, OSC, C-J04-1968-002 – Villes candidates – Vienna; Letter, Heinrich Drimmel to Avery Brundage, 29 June 1963, OSC, C-J04-1968-002 – Villes candidates – Vienna.

<sup>69</sup> 'SURPRISE: Vienne et Berlin candidats à l'organisation des Jeux Olympiques 1968', *Le Progrès*, 22 May 1963, 9.

<sup>70</sup> Stein Savik, 'Olympiske sommerleker kanskje til Berlin i 1968', *Aftenposten*, 22 May 1963, 1, 17.

<sup>71</sup> 'Berlin som olympisk arena', *Sportsmanden*, 24 May 1963, 6.

<sup>72</sup> Letter 480, Hersleb Vogt, Bonn to Utenriksdepartement, 29 May 1963, Utenriksdepartement, Oslo, 74.2/33 Sommerolympiaden 1968 Mexico 31/12-69.

Nonetheless, the Norwegian diplomatic view mirrored much of the international press coverage, which extolled the potential value of an Olympic Games in all of Berlin from a sporting perspective and overcoming the Cold War.

The three powers immediately reported the German news stories back to their foreign ministries.<sup>73</sup> The French mission in Berlin expressed its frustration that West Germany had dismissed tripartite reservations.<sup>74</sup> Instead of Brandt using the Berlin bid to score propaganda points against the East Germans, the French feared the opposite: that the East Germans ‘could in turn embarrass us by accepting’ the Berlin bid ‘and by matching this acceptance with a number of limitations and conditions that would be negotiated between the Senat and the “government of the GDR”’.<sup>75</sup> The tripartite powers, through the Americans, sought further clarification from the Senat regarding the details published in the press, particularly since the West Berlin government had originally stated no further steps regarding a Berlin bid had been taken following the submission of Brandt’s letter to the IOC.<sup>76</sup>

The tripartite missions in Berlin also felt specific aspects deserved examination before they publicly stated their own positions regarding the Berlin bid.<sup>77</sup> The French mission laid out three main questions regarding how to approach the Berlin bid. First, should the bid be accepted by the East Germans, at what level would negotiations take place? Related to that point was who would control the points within the city where East and West Berliners cross from one side of the city to the other. The tripartite powers played a major role in this area and therefore could not be excluded from any Olympic planning. Berlin’s continued four-power status meant the Americans, British, French and Soviets were still the responsible authorities and not the Germans; the tripartite states therefore believed the East German government had no authority in the city. The second question was whether the tripartite powers should support the Berlin bid. The French noted that if the East Germans ultimately do ‘not join the project, it will probably, but not certainly, veto the West Berlin bid’.<sup>78</sup> However, if the East Germans actually agreed to move forward with a joint bid, should the tripartite powers oppose this application? Finally, they wondered whether any of the three countries could possibly exert any influence on the IOC against the Berlin plan. If that course of action was possible, the French wanted the British to undertake those efforts so neither they nor the Americans presented a self-interested appearance because of Lyon and Detroit’s candidacies.<sup>79</sup> The first question clearly framed the issue around the tripartite powers’ position within the city and the bid’s potential threat, but the last question demonstrated the French wanted to prevent criticism of prioritising their own city’s Olympic aspirations. Both Allied rights in Berlin and domestic sport goals mattered to the French, but they did not want to jeopardise Lyon’s chances.

The mission representatives agreed to raise the issue in their next meeting with Brandt and recommended the embassies should discuss this issue with the Foreign Ministry.<sup>80</sup> Before that could happen, however, Brandt confirmed on television that he had submitted Berlin’s candidacy to the IOC with the support of the Berlin Senat and the German National Olympic Committee, and that he hoped Berlin could host the 1968 Olympic Games.<sup>81</sup> Two days after Brandt’s television appearance, the East German press published a response. Instead of leading with the Berlin bid, the first half of the article in *Neues Deutschland*, the state paper, reminded readers that it had been Willi Daume and the West Germans who had stopped German-German sport in August 1961 (after East Germany built the

<sup>73</sup> Telegram 529, Bonn to Foreign Office, 22 May 1963, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa, RG 25, 6081 50341-C-40 File Part 3.2.

<sup>74</sup> Telegram 1252/56, Le Roy, Berlin to Bonn, 21 May 1963, Centre des Archives diplomatiques de Nantes, Nantes, France, 378PO/6, Box 2202.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Telegram 1175, Hulick, Berlin to Secretary of State, 22 May 1963, NA, RG 59, CFPF 1963, EDU 15, Box 3240.

<sup>77</sup> Telegram 1182, Hulick, Berlin to Secretary of State, 24 May 1963, NA, RG 59, CFPF 1963, EDU 15, Box 3240.

<sup>78</sup> Telegram 1275/1279, Le Roy, Berlin to Ambafrance Bonn, 24 May 1963, CADC, 179QO/75.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Telegram 1182, Hulick, Berlin to Secretary of State, 24 May 1963, NA, RG 59, CFPF 1963, Box 3240.

<sup>81</sup> Telegram 1295/1297, Le Roy, Berlin to Ambafrance Bonn, 27 May 1963, CADC, 179QO/75.

Berlin Wall, a detail the paper left out of its story). The article then stated that some ‘strange reports’ were coming from the West German press about the West Germans having submitted an application to the IOC for Berlin to host the 1968 Olympics. The paper expressed disbelief and cautioned that people ‘cannot take this message seriously’ because only East German sports authorities have ‘exclusive powers to negotiate sporting matters in the capital of the German Democratic Republic’. *Neues Deutschland* also stated that neither the East German Olympic Committee nor the government knew about such an application, and then followed with quotes that the global press was sceptical of the Berlin Olympic idea.<sup>82</sup> Although the East German sport leaders had spoken with Daume on the telephone about the possibility of Berlin’s bid in April when the plan was not yet public, the official East German line did not acknowledge the earlier approach about both parts of Berlin hosting the Olympics.<sup>83</sup>

The East German response did not alter the position of the West Berlin government. When Brandt met with the tripartite powers, he expressed surprise at the tone of the East German statements.<sup>84</sup> The US mission reported to the State Department that when they had remarked to Brandt that he now gave the impression he was ‘much more serious about [the] proposal than he had originally conveyed’ to them, ‘Brandt attempted [to] justify his position by stating that privately he did not believe anything would come of [the] plan, but publicly he had to play his cards as though he did, and of course he would be happy if, contrary [to] his expectations, [the] idea could be implemented.’<sup>85</sup> The Senat as well refused to end its support, telling the tripartite powers that the *Neues Deutschland* article could not be considered a formal East German refusal of a joint Berlin Olympic bid because it was just a newspaper article.<sup>86</sup> The embassy representatives in Bonn raised this issue at their quadripartite meeting on 29 May, the same day as the *Neues Deutschland* article. The French representative commented that it appeared the East German authorities had rejected the entire project, with the Foreign Ministry representative replying the result was pleasing because it showed that sport was above all a political affair for East Germany.<sup>87</sup> The East German refusal to support a Berlin Olympic bid might have appeared to achieve Brandt’s propaganda aims for the proposal, but in fact the East German claim that Brandt, Daume and the West German Olympic Committee were not truthful in their actions regarding the bid minimised any potential benefit for the West.

Even with conflicting details appearing in the press and being told to the tripartite powers, the Berlin bid unravelled in early June. The IOC Executive Board discussed at length the late submission of Berlin and Vienna’s bids at its June meeting, concluding neither city had met the application deadline. More importantly, though, they decided that the Berlin bid could not move forward because East Berlin had not provided a similar letter of support for the city’s candidacy and thus failed to meet the IOC’s requirements.<sup>88</sup> The IOC’s decision regarding Berlin and Vienna, published in the German and global press, officially ended the possibility of the Olympics being hosted in the divided city.<sup>89</sup>

The Berlin bid had remained unknown to the public, but once the German media broke the story the global press presented a variety of views. Some commentary supported the position which played into the positive propaganda which Brandt had hoped to generate, but in the other countries with bids

<sup>82</sup> ‘Die Olympischen Spiele und Herr Daume’, *Neues Deutschland*, 29 May 1963, 4.

<sup>83</sup> Reunion des commandants avec le Maire Brandt, 29 May 1963, CADC, 178QO/1719.

<sup>84</sup> Telegram 1208, Calhoun, Berlin to Secretary of State, 31 May 1963, NA, RG 59, CFPF 1963, Box 3240; Reunion des commandants avec le Maire Brandt, 29 May 1963, CADC, 178QO/1719.

<sup>85</sup> Telegram 1208, Calhoun, Berlin to Secretary of State, 31 May 1963, NA, RG 59, CFPF 1963, Box 3240.

<sup>86</sup> Telegram 1325/1328, Le Roy, Berlin to Ambafrance Bonn, 30 May 1963, CADC, 179QO/75.

<sup>87</sup> Compte rendu de la reunion quadripartite, 29 May 1963, CADC, 178QO/1719.

<sup>88</sup> Procès-Verbal Réunion de la Commission Exécutive du Comité International Olympique, 5 June 1963, University of Illinois Archives, Urbana, Illinois, USA, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 92, Executive Board, Lausanne, June 5, 1963 (Reel 50).

<sup>89</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Executive Board of the International Olympique Committee with the representatives of the International Sport Federations, 6 June 1963, BAB, SAPMO, DR 510/447; ‘West Berlin, Vienna Rejected for Olympics’, *Washington Post*, 6 June 1963, B2; ‘Proposal for Olympic Games in Berlin Rejected’, *The Times (London)*, 7 June 1963, 10; ‘Pour les Jeux de 1968: Les candidatures de Berlin et de Vienne seraient rejetées’, *Le Monde*, 7 June 1963, 19.

for the 1968 Olympic Games the coverage took a self-interested view and considered the impact on their own hosting aspirations. The tripartite powers, fully aware of but unable to stop the bid, began to consider how they could influence the IOC against this plan. However, with the IOC's decision six months after the initial idea to organise the Olympic Games in the divided city, the joint Berlin bid was dead. At the next quadripartite meeting in Bonn, the Foreign Ministry merely confirmed the IOC had rejected Berlin's candidacy; no one made any further comments on the matter.<sup>90</sup>

### Assessing the Anti-Bid Diplomacy

While foreign diplomats did not speak out publicly against Berlin's plans, they tried to quietly influence their German counterparts to stop the bid from progressing. For all the supposed benefits, the West Germans had nonetheless sought to keep it quiet from the tripartite powers, East German sport officials and the public. Regardless of whether officials within West Germany's government and sport organisations, as well as the West Berlin Senat and mayor, viewed the idea of a joint Berlin bid purely as a propaganda stunt or as a calculated move with respect to East German relations, the tripartite powers repeatedly stated that they did not support a Berlin bid and actively encouraged the Germans to cease these efforts. The rhetoric from all sides about the Berlin bid was couched in terms of propaganda, yet the West German considerations of the plan coming to fruition and their attempts to prevent the tripartite powers from learning of these efforts undermine the claim that it was only a propaganda stunt. The Americans, French and British considered a joint Berlin Olympics as a problematic endeavour for both West Germany and their own position within Berlin but emphasised in their discussions with each other and the German representatives the more basic logistical challenges and their view that the propaganda benefit was misguided. The West German efforts to promote a joint Berlin Olympic Games in 1968 – whether by the federal government, West Berlin politicians or sport leaders – need to be reconsidered in light of their deception of the country's closest political allies and their repeated arguments against such a proposal and any potential propaganda. A joint Olympic Games across East and West Berlin directly threatened the tripartite position in Berlin, and their response to this idea demonstrates that the Berlin bid was more complex than merely being a propaganda stunt or calculated political move to strengthen the West German position in relation to East Germany, involving more players than just West German politicians and sport leaders. The Americans and French had the strongest interest in discouraging this plan because it diminished their own prospects for the Olympics to take place in either Detroit or Lyon. They both acknowledged this concern internally but did not share these self-interested reasons with their diplomatic colleagues. Several motivations influenced the tripartite position against a Berlin bid, but regardless of which reason was most important to each foreign ministry, diplomats emphasised the aspects which appealed more to West Germany than their self-interested reasons.

The secrecy from the West German government regarding the Berlin bid and the American, British and French actions to end it both mark a sharp contrast within Olympic bidding, demonstrating the problematic nature of the idea of a joint Berlin Olympic Games in a period of heightened Cold War tensions. Governments publicly declare support for their city to host the Olympics, passing resolutions in representative bodies, writing letters in support of the candidates which are reproduced in the official bid books, and even appearing in the presentations to the IOC. These declarations are not marked confidential – except in the case of Brandt and Daume's letters, demonstrating their recognition of the political challenges of this endeavour. The actions by the tripartite diplomats to end the Berlin bid similarly mark an anomaly within the Olympic bidding process as diplomats normally promote their city's efforts overseas.<sup>91</sup> Cities might emphasise specific aspects of their own bids which highlight the deficiencies of their competitors, but international sport would consider it 'unsportsmanlike' for a

<sup>90</sup> *Compte rendu de la reunion quadripartite*, 12 June 1963, CADC, 178QO/1719.

<sup>91</sup> Heather L. Dichter, 'Canadian Government Involvement in Calgary's Failed 1968 Winter Olympic Bid', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 38, 13–14 (2021), 1329–49; Dichter, 'Diplomatic Turn'.

bid committee, and especially government representatives, to take direct action against another candidate city. Yet, in the case of the joint Berlin bid, the American, British and French diplomats repeatedly told their German counterparts, albeit in private meetings and not publicly, not to move forward with this plan. For the American and French diplomats, these actions had the extra benefit of protecting their own cities' desires to organise the 1968 Olympic Games.

West Germany had relied on its NATO allies to maintain its position as the sole legitimate German state through the alliance's support of not allowing East German national teams to participate in sporting events within their borders. NATO circulated lists of upcoming sporting events, and German diplomats frequently spoke with their counterparts at NATO and abroad about German-German sporting issues.<sup>92</sup> Yet, West Germany and the tripartite powers even kept their NATO allies in the dark about the Berlin bid, with the other NATO states – including the two with Olympic candidate cities – only learning about it when the news broke in May. Once that happened, American, British and French diplomats knew they could not speak out against the Berlin Olympic idea, which would make the West appear to be bringing politics into sport. Even though they had expressed their views against a Berlin Olympic Games to the Foreign Ministry, the Berlin Senat and Willy Brandt, the tripartite powers knew the communist bloc would use any public comments for their own propaganda benefit.

The short-lived all-Berlin Olympic bid was ultimately subordinate to the larger issue of sport and politics – Berlin's special status (a legacy of the occupation), the German-German relationship and broader Cold War politics. Brundage always promoted the concept that sport and politics were separate. His encouragement of a joint Berlin bid appeared in line with the formation of the all-German Olympic team, which in his view demonstrated how sport could rise above politics and promote peace. However, governments at the local, regional and national levels are all involved when a city organises the Olympic Games. Support for a joint Berlin bid was therefore a political act. Brundage frequently commented that, through the all-German Olympic team, the IOC had done what politicians could not: overcome the division of Germany.<sup>93</sup> Selecting Berlin, a city divided by a concrete and barbed wire wall, to organise the Olympic Games would be an explicitly political act. The IOC never had this opportunity, as technicalities – or at least the excuse of technicalities to avoid what the IOC members surely realised would be an Olympics fraught with major political challenges – ultimately prevented Berlin from being formally considered by the full IOC membership. The idea of an Olympic Games in Berlin only resurfaced in the early 1990s for the 2000 Olympics after the reunification of Germany and the divided city.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Dichter, *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games*.

<sup>93</sup> 'The combined German team means so much, because it was a great victory of sport over politics that I don't propose to give it up without a struggle'. Letter, Avery Brundage to Albert Meyer, 19 Jan. 1963, OSC, Republique Federale d'Allemagne, Correspondance 1961–1964.

<sup>94</sup> Molly Wilkinson Johnson, 'Mega-Events, Urban Space, and Social Protest: The Olympia 2000 Bid in Reunified Berlin, 1990–1993', *Central European History*, 52, 4 (2019), 689–712.

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