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# An Integrative Symbol for a Divided Country? Commemorating the 1984 Sarajevo Winter Olympics in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the 1992-1995 War until Today

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## *Summary*

To what extent can deeply divided societies develop integrative and connecting symbols that are transgressing political, social and national borders and division lines? The present text addresses this question by analyzing the discourses and memories of the 1984 Sarajevo Winter Olympics in contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). After examining the discourses around the Games in 1984, the text analyzes the practices and narratives around the official anniversaries of the Games which took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, and 2014. It furthermore explores how Olympic symbols are used today in the public urban space in Sarajevo and in East Sarajevo, and how ordinary people from different parts of BiH perceive the Sarajevo Olympics in the present day. The analysis of the official anniversary commemorations shows that the Sarajevo Olympics, a symbol of a united Yugoslavia in 1984, and a symbol of destruction and division within BiH in 1994, have once again become a more integrative symbol in 2014, currently connecting Sarajevo and East Sarajevo. Being officially commemorated and relating to a strong popular memory, both independently from and even across political and ethnic division lines, gives the Sarajevo Winter Olympics an outstanding place in the culture of remembrance of contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina.

*Keywords:* Sarajevo Winter Olympics, Historical Symbols, Memorialization, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Identity

## **1. Introduction**

Regarding the use of historical symbols in the post-Yugoslav space, the focus in scholarly research and in public discussion is primarily on two aspects: the construction of new national symbols on the one hand, and the competition and con-

flicts around symbols and related memories on the other.<sup>1</sup> Much less attention is usually given to the question of existence of integrative and connecting symbols that would transgress political, social and national borders and division lines.<sup>2</sup> The following text will focus on this question by analyzing the discourses and memories of one specific event: the 1984 Sarajevo Winter Olympics (SWO). To what extent have the 1984 SWO been and continue to be an integrative symbol within Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) since its independence? At first sight, the SWO seem to have the potential to be an integrative symbol, for two reasons: firstly, Olympic Games in general are in their self-definition a connecting symbol, as the official narrative around Olympic Games is about peace and cooperation among peoples and countries from all over the world.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, the SWO in 1984 are generally considered to have been a very successfully organized event and one of the rare positive moments in the late history of Yugoslavia.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, since the 1992-1995 war, BiH has been known as an extremely divided society, also in terms of symbols and memories (Pauker, 2012; Dević, 2014; Karačić, 2012; Moll, 2013). In this context, it will be particularly interesting to explore whether the remembrance of the 1984 Winter Olympics plays any significant role in today's BiH: Does a society as divided as BiH have any chance of developing integrative symbols? Are the SWO one of the rare symbols of connection within post-war BiH or have they become one more symbol of division and polarization?

<sup>1</sup> See for example Kolstø, 2014 and Kuljić, 2010. For a journalistic approach to the topic see for example: "Ethnic Divisions set in stone", *Balkan Insight* 25 June 2013, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/ethnic-divisions-set-in-stone> (All internet sources were last accessed on 15 January 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Different civil society actors in BiH are for example trying to disseminate stories of interethnic help and rescue which occurred during the 1992-1995 war as integrative symbols of reconciliation. On these efforts see my paper presentation: "A positive hero for everyone? Challenges and possibilities of creating consensual memory sites in divided post-conflict societies: the memorialization of Srđan Aleksić in the countries of the former Yugoslavia", at the conference "Perspectives in (post)conflict academia and society: Opening spaces for critically assessing and rethinking history and memory", organized by the Universities of Sarajevo and Zurich, Sarajevo, 15-16 March 2013 (to be published in 2015). The question of unifying symbols in BiH is also addressed by Pauker, 2006 and Pauker, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> As appears for example in the symbolism of the Olympic flag with "the five interlaced rings, which represent the union of the five continents" or in the definition that "the goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity". IOC, Olympic charter, 9 September 2013: 10-11. [http://www.olympic.org/documents/olympic\\_charter\\_en.pdf](http://www.olympic.org/documents/olympic_charter_en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Despite having been a very spectacular and widely commented event, there is a lack of scholarly literature about the SWO. One of the rare academic articles has been written by Pedrotty, 2010. For a short overview of the history of the SWO see Dunkelberger, 2004, for a short examination of the importance of the SWO for the town of Sarajevo see Donia, 2009: 246-248.

Although the question of the integrative or divisive role of the SWO-memories has not yet been explored, there has been a lot of stimulating research on this topic in relation to other sports events and figures. Regarding Yugoslavia and the post-Yugoslav space, recent research has tackled the question of the transition of multicultural sports symbols from the socialist Yugoslavia to its successor-states, in relation to the emergence of new ethno-national sports symbols (Mills, 2012; Perica, 2014). More generally, in the framework of research on sports and history on the one hand, and critical studies of symbols and rituals on the other, sports events and symbols such as the Olympic Games have attracted a lot of scholarly attention, which has led to critical analysis of the Olympic Games as symbols of international understanding. Different scholars have shown how strongly these global sports events stir up competition and rivalry between nations and countries, and also how much they can generate international dissent and conflict, as illustrated by boycott discussions, especially those around the 1936 Berlin, 1980 Moscow and 1984 Los Angeles Games (Krüger and Murray, 2003; d'Agati, 2013).<sup>5</sup> Scholars have also turned their attention to the sociopolitical role of Olympic Games *within* a country, demonstrating how governments and media use such sports events for national identity-building processes (Tomlinson and Young, 2006), but also how attempts to use the Olympic Games as an integrative tool within a country have been increasingly challenged by internal dissent and opposition to the Olympic Games (Lenskyi, 2008; Boykoff, 2014). All in all, the flourishing literature about the Olympic Games clearly illustrates the simultaneously integrative and divisive potential of such sports events, even if the focus of recent research has been more on the latter dimension. Scholars have examined the question of the integrative or divisive role of Olympic Games not only regarding the time-periods before and during their organization, but also regarding their aftermath in relation to the discussion of their legacies and impact (Mangan and Dyreson, 2013).<sup>6</sup> However, within the research on the aftermath of the Games, the emphasis has been more on the question of consequences for the organizing town and country, and to date less on the question of how the Games are remembered and whether also the remembrance of Olympic Games is a dividing or connecting factor for one or a number of countries. Following Pierre Nora's concept, Olympic Games can be seen as *lieux de mémoire*, as (material and immaterial) reference-objects which groups construct and use to strengthen their group's memory and identity. To what extent are Olympic Games developing into unifying memory sites within a society in the

<sup>5</sup> For a critical examination of peacemaking-approaches and discourses within the Olympic movement see for example Spaaij and Burlleson, 2014.

<sup>6</sup> The question of legacy and impact of Olympic Games has become, since the 1990s, a major topic of concern and discussion within the Olympic movement, the media and the scholar research, cp. IOC / Olympic Studies Centre, 2014.

decades after they took place? As for this question, analyzing the remembrance of the SWO in BiH since its independence in 1992 offers an even more interesting case study, as this remembrance process has faced a polarized environment throughout this period of almost twenty-five years, with the 1992-1995 war first, and the divided political culture and system of post-war BiH since.<sup>7</sup>

How will I explore the remembrance of the 1984 SWO in BiH from its independence until today and the question of its integrative potential? The main part of my article will focus on the analysis of the anniversaries of the SWO which took place in BiH in 1994, 1999, 2004, 2009, and 2014. For each of these anniversaries, I will examine the practices and the narratives around these events: To what extent have the organization of these anniversaries and the narratives around them been inclusive, and for whom, or, on the contrary, contested, polarizing and divisive? The chronological approach will allow us to see if there has been an evolution in the past twenty years, and a comparison of the different anniversaries will be a main indicator for exploring the degree of integration or division related to public memory of the SWO. Before analyzing the successive anniversaries from 1994 to 2014, I will also explore the discourses around the SWO when they took place in 1984: This will help to better understand the subsequent evolutions and to see whether elements of the originally dominating discourses appear also in the narratives which have developed in BiH since its independence in 1992. In order to analyze the SWO-remembrance not only on the level of official practices and media discourses in combination with the SWO-anniversaries, I will complete my research by tackling two questions: first, I will examine the extent to which and the way Olympic symbols are used today in the public urban space in and around Sarajevo. Second, I will explore the extent to which the SWO-memories are integrative among the population today, by examining how ordinary people from different parts of BiH looked at the SWO in the framework of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the SWO, in 2014. In the conclusion, I will summarize the question of the integrative potential of the SWO in today's BiH and will connect my analysis with some of the more general research questions about memorialization in the post-Yugoslav space and about the integrative role of Olympic Games. I will mainly use published reports and statements from the organizers of the 1984 SWO and of their anniversaries, media footage, especially daily newspapers and internet news portals, archival material as well

<sup>7</sup> For the use of Pierre Nora's concept of *lieu de mémoire* for Olympic Games cp. Pfister, 2013. In her text Pfister is focusing on the question how a country and its government are articulating their vision of history during and through the Olympic Games they organize, but other articles in this volume treat explicitly the question which role Olympic Games later play in the public remembrance of a country, see for example Niehaus, 2013. Another case which has been explored is the remembrance of the Berlin 1936 Olympics, especially which role it played for the Munich Olympics 1972, see Schiller and Young, 2010: 56-86.

as personal field observations and interviews with different actors in these anniversaries, and for the last part about the attitudes among ordinary people, a personally conducted survey.<sup>8</sup> In the article, I will concentrate on the question of the integrative potential of the SWO-memories only within BiH, but it would certainly be interesting to analyze the memories and discourses related to the SWO in Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, in order to complement this research and to explore the role of the SWO-remembrance in the post-Yugoslav space in general.

## 2. The SWO in 1984: Celebrating the Unity of Yugoslavia

The time period of the preparation and the organization of the SWO, the first half of the 1980s, was marked in Yugoslavia by the deepening of the economic crisis and the growing rivalries between the different republics and, on the international level, by an intensification of the Cold War. In this context, the authorities in Yugoslavia involved in the organization of the SWO chose an extremely integrative approach and narrative around this event. The main discourse can be summarized as follows: Sarajevo and its Olympics are bringing all of Yugoslavia together, and Sarajevo and Yugoslavia are bringing the whole world together. The integrative approach within Yugoslavia was illustrated by the involvement of companies from all the Yugoslav republics in the construction of the Olympic sites and the logistics of the Games, or by the decision for the Olympic flame – torch relay to pass through all the republics before arriving in Sarajevo.<sup>9</sup> The discourse on internal Yugoslav unity was completed by a narrative of Yugoslavia's prestige and its unifying role on the international level; the organizers operated within a sort of fusion between the Yugoslavian ideal and the Olympic ideal and “promoted Yugoslavia as the healthy embodiment of Olympism” (Pedrotty, 2010: 347): peace, brotherhood and unity across Yugoslavia and through the world with the help of Yugoslavia, “a country which bases all its relations on the principles of the Olympic Charter” (Organizing Committee, 1984c: 7) and the Olympic Games and the Olympic movement “whose humane ideals are identical with the peace policy of Tito's non-aligned Yugoslavia” (Organizing Committee, 1984b: 190).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> I especially thank the following persons for the information or the material they provided to me in the framework of my research: Christopher Bennett, Dubravka Borovčanin, Grujo Bjeković, Goran Brčkalović, Saša Buljević, Bérengère Dambrine, Said Fazlagić, Miroslav Goreta, Igor Golijanin, Sejdalija Gušić and his colleagues from the Historical Archives Sarajevo, Elma Hašimbegović, Zorica Jovanović, Ahmed Karabegović, Adisa Marshall, Edin Numankandić, Amira Sadiković, Dragomir Sokolović, Vladan Vukliš.

<sup>9</sup> Cp. Organizing Committee, 1984b: 122-124; Organizacioni komitet, 1984a: 80-89, 112-121.

<sup>10</sup> The integrative and connecting approach of the organizers was also illustrated by the choice of the main symbol of the Games, the “Pahuljica”, a stylized snowflake which was for example used in cartoons in *Oslobodjenje* to emphasize the message of peace and of connecting peo-

This Yugoslav dimension of the Games was not just promoted by the central Yugoslav authorities, but especially by the Organizing Committee (OC) of the SWO, which was created in 1980, and which was mainly constituted of persons from BiH, and most of them from Sarajevo. The driving force behind the Games was Branko Mikulić, the head of the League of Communists in BiH, and president of the OC, in cooperation with the municipality of Sarajevo.<sup>11</sup> Mikulić wanted the SWO to be not only a prestige success for Yugoslavia, but also a way to modernize Sarajevo and strengthen the economic and political role of BiH within Yugoslavia. Within the general narrative about the Games, BiH was therefore not absent, and we can find in some publications and declarations the triptych “Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Yugoslavia”.<sup>12</sup> Various activities were organized across BiH on the occasion of the SWO: Olympic boards were founded in the municipalities of BiH and initiated the construction of twenty-three winter sports resorts across all of BiH (Organizacioni komitet, 1984b: 95). However, the discourse on BiH was not predominant and was usually embedded in the general discourse about Yugoslavia, with the multinational BiH presented as a mirror of the multinational Sarajevo and Yugoslavia (Pedrotty, 2010: 346). In most of the documents about the SWO, the officially used formula was “Sarajevo – Yugoslavia”, without explicitly mentioning BiH.<sup>13</sup> Within the narrative about the Yugoslav character of the SWO, strong emphasis was placed on the town of Sarajevo as a symbol for Yugoslavia in general: “Sarajevo undertook and organized the XIV Olympic Winter Games as a representative of entire Yugoslavia” (Organizing Committee, 1984b: 192).<sup>14</sup>

But the organization of the SWO and the integrative Yugoslav approach around them encountered also strong opposition within Yugoslavia in the years before the Games. Since the International Olympic Committee (IOC) assigned the Olympics to Sarajevo and Yugoslavia in May 1978, there had been resistance in various other republics, particularly in Slovenia. The Slovenian leadership even explicitly asked Tito in 1979 to cancel or postpone the Games, and also in the following years this opposition was internally and publicly articulated, with mainly the following argument: In a time when economic stabilization was the highest priority, the Games would be a financial disaster, suggesting also that Sarajevo and BiH would not be

ple: See *Oslobodjenje* 10 February 1984, where peace doves are superposed to the “Pahuljica”-forms, and 20 February 1984, where persons of different continents are holding hands within the “Pahuljica”.

<sup>11</sup> For the role of Branko Mikulić for the SWO and in BiH in general see Lasić, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> See for example Organizing Committee, 1984a: 4.

<sup>13</sup> See for example Organizacioni komitet, 1984d: 1.

<sup>14</sup> See for example also the editorial of *Oslobodjenje* for the opening of the SWO, 8 February 1984: “Today Yugoslavia is one big Sarajevo”.

able to organize the Games properly.<sup>15</sup> The BiH leadership rejected this kind of criticism as paternalism against BiH, a lack of support for BiH and Yugoslavia, and Slovenia's jealousy because of winter tourism. They also argued that the Games would be economically beneficial stimulating the development of tourism in BiH and Yugoslavia in general, and in the end, managed to convince Tito not to cancel or postpone the SWO (Dizdarević, 2011: 53-60; id., 2009: 73-74). But the resistance in several other republics continued, this time against their own involvement in the SWO; the level of this opposition is clear, for example, in this newspaper quote from Belgrade from November 1980: "Shall we allow the 1984 Olympics to be just Bosnian and wait for TV broadcasts, as if Sarajevo were the same as Gothenburg or Sapporo, or will the 14<sup>th</sup> Winter Olympics be ours, Yugoslav, as well? It is time to decide..."<sup>16</sup> For several years, a fierce fight took place especially around the financing of the SWO. In the original budget from 1978 the organizers had proposed that the Republic of BiH would cover 2/3 of the expenses, and the other republics and the federal government the remaining 1/3. But the negotiations on the budget failed several times, as the other republics argued that their financial contribution was too high. This opposition left its mark: after long negotiations the final budget adopted in 1982 foresaw that BiH would cover not 66 per cent but 80 per cent of the expenses. Because of this, the BiH leadership decided to impose a tax of 0.2 or 0.3 per cent on each worker's income in BiH in 1982 and 1983, which also caused some dissatisfaction within BiH.<sup>17</sup> But at least an agreement had finally been reached between the Yugoslav republics and a budget had been adopted, with financial participation of the other republics, so that the Games could indeed be presented as a Yugoslav enterprise. The fact that the financial contribution of BiH was much higher than that of the other republics was not emphasized in the official narrative around the Games, which continued to highlight their Yugoslav dimension.<sup>18</sup>

In the run-up to and during the Games, criticism continued concerning the financial aspect of the Games, including within BiH, with many expressing doubts that it made sense to organize such an event against the backdrop of the persistent

<sup>15</sup> See for example the critics of the journal "Katedra" from Maribor (Slovenia) in June 1978, reproduced in Organizacioni komitet, 1984c: 25.

<sup>16</sup> *Novosti* 8, 15 November 1980.

<sup>17</sup> On the financial battles around the SWO see Pedrotty, 2010: 348-356. For the provisional budget from 1978 see Historical Archives Sarajevo: SR BiH, Izvršno vijeće, Skupština SR BiH: *Društveni dogovor o organizovanju i finansiranju XIV zimskih olimpijskih igara 1984. godine u Sarajevu*, Sarajevo, November 1978.

<sup>18</sup> See for example Organizing Committee, 1984b: 182, where the chapter "Finances" begins with a paragraph emphasizing that "the whole of Yugoslavia participated in financing" the Games in Sarajevo.

economic crisis in Yugoslavia.<sup>19</sup> In addition, nationalist groups in the diaspora, especially from the Croatian side, planned to use the Games for anti-Yugoslav and anti-communist protest and sabotage actions within their countries of residence and also in Sarajevo itself. But the Yugoslav security services, in cooperation with the Ministries of Interior in other countries, used all possible means to avert any significant protest action.<sup>20</sup> And also the critical voices regarding the financial aspect eventually became marginal. With the logistical support of the other republics, the Games were very successfully organized in February 1984, and the organizers, along with the IOC, presented “the games of joy”<sup>21</sup> as a big success for Yugoslavia, even before they actually took place. They could indeed advance a number of arguments attesting to the success of the Games: there was a record number of forty-nine participating countries (twelve more than four years earlier), and no boycott took place, as occurred during the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow and again a few months later during the Games in Los Angeles.<sup>22</sup> There had been no major organizational problems during the Games, and the international reactions were in general very positive. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, for example, stated that, “the Yugoslav organizers have done an excellent job” and praised “the human warmth and the heartfelt hospitality” of Sarajevo.<sup>23</sup> Within the population of Sarajevo, there had been a great interest and support for the Games; in the other Yugoslav republics the Games also drew a lot of positive public attention, which reached its peak when Jure Franko won the first medal ever for Yugoslavia at Winter Olympics.<sup>24</sup> Also, after the Games, the organizers proclaimed that they ended with a financial surplus

<sup>19</sup> Historical Archive Sarajevo, Fond-Zbirka Bahrudina Bijedića, Sign. BB-610, Box 9: SR BiH / Republički sekretarijat za unutrašnje poslove Sarajevo, “Bilten službi bezbjednosti” / Akcija “Jahorina ’84”, issues from 18.1.1984 to 24.2.1984.

<sup>20</sup> Ib. Concerning the security measures before and during the SWO see also *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) 7 February 1984.

<sup>21</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 8 February 1984.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. the comment of *La Stampa*: “Sarajevo has answered the universal need for Games which bring nations together and push away the risk of boycott. (...) Games which are uniting, and not dividing...” Quoted in Organizacioni komitet, 1984b: 129.

<sup>23</sup> FAZ 15 February 1984, and 20 February 1984. A sample of positive reactions from the international press was gathered by the organizers in Organizacioni komitet, 1984b: 128-148. The general positive feedback was summarized in the statement of the IOC President Samaranch that the SWO had been the “best organized Winter Games in the history of the Olympic movement”. In the subsequent twenty years of his presidency, Samaranch had regularly repeated this formula for other Olympic Games, but he used this expression for the first time for the Games in Sarajevo, and the quote was often reproduced in post-Olympic publications in Yugoslavia. See for example Organizacioni komitet, 1984b: 3.

<sup>24</sup> A selection of reactions from other Republics and within BiH were published by the OC in the publications Organizacioni komitet, 1984a and 1984c.

source of 10 million dollars.<sup>25</sup> Despite the criticism prior to the Games, the SWO immediately became a largely positively connoted memory site and symbol, and could be presented as a prestige success for Yugoslavia and as a successful illustration of its *brotherhood and unity* ideology.<sup>26</sup>

### 3. 1994: Commemorating the Winter Olympics in Times of War

The images of joy and unity from 1984 couldn't contrast more sharply with the reality ten years later. Since the beginning of the 1990s, Yugoslavia had been disintegrating in a violent way; in 1994, BiH was in the middle of a war that had started two years before, and the capital of the now independent BiH and Olympic City of Sarajevo had been under siege since April 1992. The war and the siege also directly affected the Olympic sites and heritage. Several of the sites situated around the town were direct combat zones, especially the Igman and Bjelašnica mountains, where skiing competitions had taken place in 1984, and on the Trebević Mountain, the former bobsled run became part of the fortification for the troops of the Army of Republika Srpska (RS) around Sarajevo. Only Mount Jahorina (the venue of alpine skiing disciplines for women in 1984) was not directly affected by combat, as it was behind the siege line and under the control of the Army of RS, and therefore cut off from the town of Sarajevo. Within Sarajevo, several Olympic sites were shelled and destroyed by the RS military's artillery fire. The Olympic Museum, opened in 1984, in the center of town in an Austrian-Hungarian villa, was destroyed on 27 April 1992, and the Zetra Sports Center building, which had been built especially for the SWO and where the figure skating competitions and the closing ceremony had taken place, was destroyed on 25 May 1992.<sup>27</sup>

The contrast between the Olympic Games and the war, between peace and joy on the one hand and destruction and brutality on the other, became an important part of the narrative around the besieged city, within Sarajevo and on an international level. Images of 1984 and of the same sites during the siege were regularly used in tandem, especially to appeal for the solidarity of the international public: the music-video "Help Bosnia now" by the Sarajevo pop-group *Aid* in 1992 was recorded in the destroyed Zetra building, and alternated between images from 1984 and from the siege.<sup>28</sup> Another example were postcards from the Sarajevo design group Trio,

<sup>25</sup> Organizing Committee, 1984b: 182-186.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. the different publications published by the OC after the SWO: Organizing Committee, 1984b, Organizacioni komitet, 1984a, 1984b and 1984c.

<sup>27</sup> Concerning the destruction of Zetra see the video-interview with Enes Terzić (<http://www.famacollection.org/index.php/tb-eng/TB-113>). The collections of the Museum were saved, as they were evacuated by the museum staff in the weeks before the shelling.

<sup>28</sup> The video on youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khqHfkuS-f8>

showing the five Olympic rings, for example, superposed with grenade impacts or transformed into barbed wire, together with the inscription “Sarajevo 1984-1994”.<sup>29</sup> In addition to emphasizing the barbarism of those who were attacking the city, the use of memories of 1984 to provide contrast with the current reality of the siege also pointed a finger at the passivity of the international community, stressing that in both 1984 and 1994, Sarajevo was the center of the world – only this time, the world was doing nothing. This disillusionment appears in a piece by journalist Zlatko Dizdarević who, for the tenth anniversary of the SWO, wrote: “All the best was once possible here. But the people who made that true are no longer alive today or will no longer be alive tomorrow. The world watched their departure from a dispassionate distance, as if they were Olympic judges.”<sup>30</sup>

Despite this disillusionment, the tenth anniversary of the Olympic Games in 1994 was very actively commemorated in Sarajevo. The town created a special Organizing Committee for the celebration of the jubilee, under the presidency of the mayor of Sarajevo and with the participation of the new Olympic Committee BiH (OC BiH) and the support of the BiH government.<sup>31</sup> The Organizing Committee elaborated an ambitious festivities program for February 1994, with exhibitions and concerts and a solemn ceremony in the National Theatre.<sup>32</sup> The activities in Sarajevo were linked with the participation of a delegation of twelve athletes from BiH and OC BiH in the February 1994 Olympic Winter Games, Lillehammer (Norway). The IOC was very actively involved in the commemoration of the SWO: at the opening ceremony in Lillehammer there was a moment of silence for Sarajevo, and some days later IOC President Samaranch left Lillehammer to visit the besieged Sarajevo, where he met President Izetbegović and promised help for the reconstruction of the destroyed venues.<sup>33</sup> “The flame is still alive” was the motto the organizers chose for this anniversary, establishing a direct continuity between 1984 and 1994.<sup>34</sup> But in the official discourses it was no longer Yugoslavia that was presented as embodiment of Olympism, but the resisting Sarajevo and BiH. Sarajevo, “the holy town of human tolerance and cosmopolitanism” which had organized the Games in 1984 was also now, through its resistance, “holding the torch of Olympic humanism and love for mankind”, declared Ejup Ganić from the BiH Presidency during the anniversa-

<sup>29</sup> The postcards can be viewed on: [http:// www.blackbox.ba/art\\_shop\\_WAR\\_poster\\_TRIO.html](http://www.blackbox.ba/art_shop_WAR_poster_TRIO.html)

<sup>30</sup> *USA Today*, 8 February 1994. Quoted in Pedrotty, 2010: 358-359.

<sup>31</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 5 February 1994.

<sup>32</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 4, 5, 8, 9, 14, and 17 February 1994.

<sup>33</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 13 and 17 February 1994.

<sup>34</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 5 February 1994.

ry.<sup>35</sup> In combination with the participation in Lillehammer, this anniversary had also other important political functions: to underline that despite the circumstances, BiH was functioning as a normal state, that BiH was part of the Olympic family and that even if the international community in general was not helping, BiH could at least count on Olympic solidarity.

But it was not only important for the town of Sarajevo and the government of BiH to actively commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Games, both despite and because of the war. On the other side of the siege line, the RS was also putting itself in the line of tradition of the Olympic heritage. After its founding in 1992, the RS created its own Olympic Committee in 1993, which in February 1994 organized an anniversary of the 1984 Games on Jahorina, in the form of a three-day event entitled “Olympic Days”, opened by Momčilo Krajišnik, president of the RS Assembly.<sup>36</sup> During the three days, various ski competitions took place on the 1984 Olympic mountain, and symbols from 1984, such as the “Pahuljica”, were also used.<sup>37</sup> This anniversary had also a direct link with the Games of Lillehammer: these “Mini-Olympics”<sup>38</sup> constituted an alternative to the Games in Lillehammer where neither athletes from Serbia-Montenegro nor from the RS were invited. The “Olympic Days” on Mount Jahorina were originally intended to underline that the RS and Serbia were not isolated, as it was announced that athletes from Greece, Russia, Bulgaria, and Romania would also participate, but when the invited countries didn’t show up, the narrative changed and emphasized the “example of world-level” of the Serb athletes.<sup>39</sup> IOC President Samaranch was also invited to participate in the anniversary on Jahorina, but he declined, arguing that IOC had not officially recognized the OC of the RS.<sup>40</sup> The will to put the RS in the continuity of the 1984 Games and to use the anniversary as a sign of legitimacy and normality is clear in this quotation from Grujo Bjeković, the General Secretary of the OC of the RS: “We did everything to mark in a dignified way the anniversary of the Olympic Games, which will be remembered for a long time for their beauty and their good organization. Foreign journalists had a chance to see the strength and determination of the Serb

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in *Oslobodjenje* 8 February 1994. In parallel, the President of the OC BiH, Stjepan Kljuić, stated regarding the participation in the Lillehammer Games that “this too is our way to fight fascism”. *Oslobodjenje* 9 February 1994.

<sup>36</sup> *Glas Srpske* 14, 17, 18, and 21 February 1994. Interview with Grujo Bjeković, former Secretary General of the OC of the RS, Pale, April 2014.

<sup>37</sup> See for example the photos from the “Olympic Days” on Jahorina published in *Glas Srpske* 21 February 1994.

<sup>38</sup> *Glas Srpske* 17 February 1994.

<sup>39</sup> See *Glas Srpske* 14 and 21 February 1994.

<sup>40</sup> *Glas Srpske* 21 February 1994.

people who put in an enormous effort to get back to normal life and to mark their traditions.”<sup>41</sup>

The two anniversaries, in Sarajevo and in Jahorina/Pale, took place a few kilometers from each other, but in two different and parallel worlds. There were some rare hints in the press of the anniversary activities on the opposite side of the siege line. *Oslobodjenje* on 5 February 1994 quotes the General Secretary of the OC BiH, Filipović, who spoke of the “alleged attempts of the ‘Olympic committee’ in the phantom state of Pale to also organize a ‘celebration’ [which] no one in the world takes seriously”, proclaiming that, “such an initiative should be ignored”.<sup>42</sup> On the other side, *Glas Srpske* covered the Games in Lillehammer, specifically to criticize the political statements made there by Stjepan Kljuić, “President of the National Olympic Committee of Muslim Bosnia and Herzegovina”,<sup>43</sup> but largely ignored the anniversary activities in Sarajevo itself, aside from the visit by Samaranch. Samaranch was heavily criticized for visiting only Sarajevo and not Jahorina, and at the same time his fascist past and connection with the Franco regime were emphasized in an effort to discredit him.<sup>44</sup> But in general, each side concentrated on its own anniversary, largely ignoring the one taking place on the other side. In 1994, the 1984 SWO can therefore be seen not so much as a (mutually) contested memory site, but foremost as a divided one.

#### 4. 1999, 2004, 2009: From Division to Connection to Indifference?

The war had brought a total division of the Olympic heritage, physically and also symbolically, in the practices and in the narratives. How did the situation evolve after the signature of the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) and the end of the war? Actually, the divisions created by the DPA, especially between the RS and the Federation, continued to divide the Olympic heritage, which was cut through the entity line: Jahorina and parts of Trebević were integrated in the RS, while Igman, Bjelašnica, and other parts of Trebević were part of the Federation. Beyond the entity lines, these mountains, which before the war were all part of the municipality of Sarajevo, were now situated in two different municipalities: Sarajevo on the one hand, and East Sarajevo as a municipality within the RS on the other hand. The post-war divisions appeared also in different organizational structures after 1995: after the war, there were still two Olympic Committees within BiH, the OC BiH

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 5 February 1994.

<sup>43</sup> *Glas Srpske* 14 February 1994.

<sup>44</sup> *Glas Srpske* 21 February 1994. During the Franco regime in Spain, Juan Antonio Samaranch had held different official functions, most prominently that of the Minister for Sports between 1967 and 1971.

and the OC RS, the latter which the IOC continued not to recognize. In Sarajevo, the public enterprise *ZOI '84* was still in charge of the Olympic sites situated in the Canton of Sarajevo, while the RS created the *Olympic Center Jahorina* as a public enterprise in charge of the Olympic heritage on Jahorina.<sup>45</sup> How did these divisions affect the anniversaries in 1999, 2004, and 2009?

In Sarajevo, the fifteenth anniversary held in February 1999, only a few years after the end of the war, included a modest, but very symbolic commemorative program which took place on the Olympic mountains of Igman and Bjelašnica. The opening of the annual “Sarajevo Winter Festival” took place on Igman 7 and 8 February 1999, and for the first time since the war, an international ski-race was organized on Bjelašnica. Both events were under the rubric of the fifteenth anniversary of the SWO. “Life has come back to the Olympic mountains”, said Bogić Bogičević, President of OC BiH, and the Prime Minister of the Federation, Edhem Bičakčić, declared: “I am glad that three years after the war we can show that the mountains of Igman and Bjelašnica are spreading the Olympic spirit”.<sup>46</sup> In tandem with this anniversary, the OC BiH talked openly about a possible candidacy for the 2010 Winter Olympics.<sup>47</sup> As the highlight of the fifteenth anniversary, the ceremonial re-opening of the Zetra building, reconstructed with the financial support of the IOC promised by Samaranch, was planned for the end of March.<sup>48</sup> The OC RS was not involved in these commemorations, nor was Jahorina part of the anniversary activities. On Jahorina, the RS authorities did not organize any specific commemorative event in February 1999.<sup>49</sup> That the RS was not focusing on this anniversary must be viewed in the context of the very tense situation in the region: February 1999 was also the period of the Kosovo crisis, with the negotiations in Rambouillet and the NATO air strikes that started on 24 March. The Kosovo crisis had also effects on the opening of Zetra. Two days before the planned 30 March opening, the OC BiH postponed the gala-show because of the international situation, but

<sup>45</sup> On the postwar divisions in BiH in general see for example Bose, 2002. For the moment no research has been published for example on the development of *ZOI '84* and of OC Jahorina. For basic information see the websites <http://www.zoi84.ba/> and <http://oc-jahorina.com/en/>. *ZOI '84* had been created in 1984 as the legal successor of the Organization Committee of the XIV Winter Olympic Games in order to administrate all its sport and leisure facilities. The acronym ZOI stands for “Zimske Olimpijske Igre”, which translated means “Winter Olympic Games”.

<sup>46</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 8 February 1999.

<sup>47</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 8 February 1999.

<sup>48</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 10 February 1999, special annex of four pages on the rebuilding of Zetra. The ceremonial opening of Zetra had originally been foreseen for 8 February 1999, the exact anniversary day of the opening of the SWO, but was finally postponed to end of March due to delays in the reconstruction. Cf. *Oslobodjenje* 16 May 1998.

<sup>49</sup> No mention also about the anniversary in *Glas Srpske* in February 1999.

decided, nevertheless, to open the building to the public.<sup>50</sup> At the end of May, IOC President Samaranch finally came to Sarajevo, to officially hand over the keys of Zetra to the Mayor of Sarajevo. The ceremony was done without any fanfare, but Samaranch used his stay to meet the three members of the BiH Presidency in order to plead for the unification of the Olympic structures within BiH.<sup>51</sup>

While the 1999 anniversary was characterized by division, 2004 presented a very different situation. In 2001 the RS agreed to dissolve its Olympic Committee and a unified National Olympic Committee of BiH was created, under the auspices of the IOC and the Office of the High Representative in BiH.<sup>52</sup> Under these circumstances, 2004 became the first post-war anniversary with elements of a joint commemoration: The official program of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary included Jahorina with an international ski competition organized for the occasion.<sup>53</sup> Many other activities took place in Sarajevo, including a gala-concert in the National Theatre, a figure skating gala-event in Zetra, several exhibitions and the reopening of the Olympic Museum within the premises of the OC BiH in the Zetra building.<sup>54</sup> A high-ranking delegation from the IOC and the European Olympic Committees (EOC) visited Sarajevo and participated in various events, and the figure skating legend Katarina Witt, who had won her first Gold Medal in 1984 at the SWO, came for a visit.<sup>55</sup> The anniversary was surrounded by a positive and optimistic atmosphere. The OC BiH talked openly about being a candidate for the 2014 Winter Olympic Games, and on the occasion of the anniversary, a memorandum of understanding and cooperation was signed between the Olympic Committees of BiH, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia and Serbia-Montenegro.<sup>56</sup> There had also been significant progress in developing a Sports Law

<sup>50</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 28, 30, and 31 March 1999.

<sup>51</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 27, 28, and 29 August 1999.

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.olympic.org/content/news/media-resources/manual-news/1999-2009/2001/04/02/sportsmen-from-all-bosnia-and-herzegovina-convene-to-enlarge-the-national-olympic-committee/>. Following the model established by the DPA for the State Presidency, it was decided that the new OC BiH would be chaired by a three-member rotating Presidency.

<sup>53</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 5 and 6 February 2004; *Nezavisne novine* 6 February 2004.

<sup>54</sup> Survey of the program: *Oslobodjenje* 5 February 2004. See also reports in *Oslobodjenje* 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14 February 2004. Additionally, every day from 3 to 22 February *Oslobodjenje* published a special page exclusively dedicated to the memory of the SWO in 1984. Also the Banja Luka-based *Nezavisne novine* reported extensively on the commemoration; see *Nezavisne novine* 21, 22, 23, 26, and 29 January 2004; 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 14, 18, and 21 February 2004; 1 and 11 March 2004.

<sup>55</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 9, 10, 11, and 12 February 2004; *Nezavisne novine* 5, 10, and 11 February 2004.

<sup>56</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 9, 10, and 11 February 2004; *Nezavisne novine* 2 and 10 February 2004. In a declaration related to the signature of the memorandum, the head of the BiH Council of Minis-

at the level of the state of BiH.<sup>57</sup> In this context, the anniversary was accompanied by a discourse about sports as a uniting link for BiH. “Sport can unify people” was the main message at a joint press conference of the OC BiH, IOC and EOC.<sup>58</sup> Jacques Rogge expressed optimism at a reception organized by BiH President Čović: “I saw Sarajevo at the time of the Winter Olympics 1984. It was a city of joy. I was in the city of horror in 1994, but today I recognized the city of hope and future. (...) We are proud that sports in BiH plays an important role in the unity of the state.”<sup>59</sup>

Within the anniversary some dissonant voices also appeared: The youth section of the Social-Democratic Union (SDU) of the Sarajevo Canton published a press declaration criticizing “the misuse of Olympic symbols” because during the award ceremony after the skiing competition on Jahorina the Olympic mascot Vučko had been shown with the colors of the RS.<sup>60</sup> But nobody else was pointing at that. More significant was the criticism of the Social Democratic Party of BiH (SDP) towards the budget of the commemoration, which was considered much too high, not well-used and non-transparent.<sup>61</sup> But these were the only public criticisms, and it is interesting to note that the more significant critique was not linked to ethnic issues.

The evolution between 1999 and 2004 can be considered a progress, quantitatively and qualitatively, in the sense that there was an increase of commemorative activities and, for the first time, joint activities beyond the entity line, and with a discourse joining the Olympic idea with the idea of unity on the level of BiH. But there was no continuity in this progression, and 2009 can be considered a setback. For the twenty-fifth anniversary, only very few and modest commemorative activities were organized in Sarajevo, which received very little media attention.<sup>62</sup> Also

ters, Adan Terzić, emphasized the will of cooperation and that the Memorandum “could be an example for other institutions of the countries of the region”. *Oslobodjenje* 10 February 2004.

<sup>57</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 10 February 2004; *Nezavisne novine* 11 March 2004. The OC BiH and the Football Federation of BiH had been charged with developing the draft of the Sports Law, which was finalized and presented to the public in April 2004, and which was then transmitted to the Parliament. *Nezavisne novine* 8 April 2004. The process then slowed down, due to political divergences, and the Sports Law was finally adopted by the State Parliament of BiH in 2008 (see: [http://www.podaci.net/\\_gBiH/propis/Zakon\\_o\\_sportu/Z-sportu02v0827-09A2.html](http://www.podaci.net/_gBiH/propis/Zakon_o_sportu/Z-sportu02v0827-09A2.html)).

<sup>58</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 11 February 2004. “Evoking memories for a better tomorrow in the whole of BiH” was the title given to an article about the anniversary by *Nezavisne novine* 9 February 2004.

<sup>59</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 11 February 2004; see also *Nezavisne novine* 10 February 2004.

<sup>60</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 11 February 2004.

<sup>61</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 8 February 2004.

<sup>62</sup> The “highlight” of the commemorations was the lighting of the Olympic flame at the Koševo stadium on 8 February 2009, by the mayor of Sarajevo, without presence of other political authorities or international delegations, and in the presence of only “very few citizens” (*Oslobodjenje* 9 February 2009). In the same article *Oslobodjenje* quotes a former Olympic official from

the program didn't include any joint activities with Jahorina. The reasons behind this can be seen in the highly problematic inter-entity relations in this period. In addition, BiH had also entered a period of disillusionment regarding sports, with the OC BiH giving up the idea of campaigning for an Olympic Winter Games in Sarajevo, not so much for political reasons, but because of the negative economic and financial situation of the country.<sup>63</sup>

### 5. The 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the SWO in February 2014: a New Impetus?

The general context in 2014 was characterized by a very bad state of relations between the two entities and an ongoing difficult economic situation. But there had nevertheless been an interesting evolution concerning the relations between the municipalities East Sarajevo and Sarajevo, which has a direct link with the Olympic heritage and also influenced the organization of the thirtieth anniversary of the SWO. Since 2009, both municipalities have been very actively cooperating regarding the joint organization of the winter edition of the European Youth Olympic Festival (EYOF). The OC BiH had, at least preliminarily, given up the idea to organize the "big games" again, and focused on more realistic prospects, convincing the two municipalities to submit a joint candidacy for the EYOF, an important European sports event organized biannually since 1991. After the first joint candidacy 2009, the second one, in 2011, succeeded and the EOC granted the organization of the 2017 EYOF to Sarajevo and East Sarajevo. The EYOF is planned to take place in both municipalities, and in the joint candidacy both municipalities strongly emphasized their common Olympic heritage from 1984.<sup>64</sup> The thirtieth anniversary of the SWO in 2014 also took place in the perspective of the EYOF 2017, and the narrative around this anniversary linked the events of 1984, 2014, and 2017, and also linked the anniversary with the participation of the BiH delegation in the Sochi Winter Games in February 2014. In 2013, the OC BiH, the Sarajevo and East Sarajevo municipalities, ZOI '84 and OC Jahorina launched the campaign "Olympic family – Let's celebrate olympism".<sup>65</sup> In this framework an "Olympic Weekend" on Jahorina, Bjelašnica and Sarajevo took place from 30 January to 2 February 2014. In the first event on Jahori-

1984 saying: "It hurts me to see how a quarter of a century since the greatest sports event in Sarajevo and BiH is marked". See also the article "Olympic shame" published in *Oslobodjenje* 13 February 2009.

<sup>63</sup> Interviews with Ahmed Karabegović, former President of the OC BiH, and Said Fazlagić, currently General Secretary of the OC BiH, Sarajevo, April 2014.

<sup>64</sup> See City of Sarajevo and City of East Sarajevo, 2012. Interviews with Said Fazlagić, General Secretary of the OC BiH, Sarajevo, April 2014, and Igor Golijanin, chief of cabinet of the Mayor of East Sarajevo, Lukavica, April 2014.

<sup>65</sup> *Slobodna Bosna* 23 January 2014, 50-52. See also the website: <http://slavimoolimpizam.com>.

na, the Sarajevo Mayor Ivo Komšić appeared together with his counterpart from East Sarajevo, Nenad Samardžija, along with figure skater Sanda Dubravčić who lit the flame in 1984. The five athletes from the Sochi Delegation, four from the RS and one from the Federation, also took part in the anniversary activities.<sup>66</sup> Another important moment of the anniversary was the gala event in Zetra on 13 February, with Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean returning to Sarajevo for the first time since their gold medal in 1984 to perform their legendary Bolero dance, to an audience of more than 5,000.<sup>67</sup> This event was a British initiative, but was co-organized by both municipalities, and despite the fact that the Mayor of East Sarajevo didn't show up and instead sent a personal representative, the RS was involved on other levels. The organizers convinced British-owned beer company "Nektar" from Banja Luka to be one of the main sponsors of this event, and the show was broadcast live by popular TV channel "Pink", guaranteeing a country-wide dissemination.<sup>68</sup>

Despite the fact that the thirtieth anniversary was very much surrounded by an integrative approach and discourse, there were also some problems and dissonant voices. One concerned the question of who should carry the flag of BiH at the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics in Sochi. According to the press, the OC BiH could not agree if it should be an athlete from the Federation or from the RS. It is difficult to say how serious the dispute was, or if it was overhyped by the journalists, but regardless, the OC BiH reached agreement very quickly.<sup>69</sup> Another aspect concerned the situation of *ZOI '84*: This public enterprise has been in a very bad financial situation for years, resulting in the non-payment or very late payment of its employees and announced layoffs. Some of the employees of *ZOI '84* therefore decided to go on strike, and used the thirtieth anniversary to talk to the press about their grievances.<sup>70</sup> Another issue concerned the planned reconstruction of the Olympic Museum. As 2014 was not only the thirtieth anniversary of the SWO but also the Centennial of the Sarajevo assassination and the outbreak of the First World War, there were attempts to link both anniversaries. The municipality of Sarajevo convinced the "Sarajevo Heart of Europe" Foundation, created by the French government in order to financially support various projects linked to the Centennial of the First World War, to

<sup>66</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 2 February 2014; *Slobodna Bosna* 6 February 2014, 54-55.

<sup>67</sup> <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-26180407>.

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Christopher Bennett, Sarajevo, April 2014, who had launched the initiative to invite Torvill and Dean. The Banja Luka based daily *Nezavisne novine*, in its edition of 15 February 2014, published an entire page dedicated to this event.

<sup>69</sup> <http://www.worldbulletin.net/world/127902/row-erupts-over-bosnia-flag-at-sochi-winter-olympics>, <http://www.sarajevotimes.com/the-skier-zana-novakovic-will-hold-the-bh-flag-at-the-opening-of-olympics-in-soci/>

<sup>70</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 2 February 2014; *Nezavisne novine* 10 February 2014.

include the reconstruction of the Olympic Museum in its program. The French Ambassador in Sarajevo announced the support publicly, but then the European Union Delegation in BiH, which was financing “Sarajevo Heart of Europe”, intervened arguing that this project would not fit with the criteria, and the reconstruction of the Olympic Museum had to be removed from the Centennial program.<sup>71</sup>

But these polemics and problems did not attract a lot of media attention. It is also interesting to observe that once again, the appearing divisions were not necessarily about ethnic issues. This is also the case concerning another event which attracted a lot of public attention and also directly affected the thirtieth anniversary: the violent anti-government protests in Sarajevo and other towns in BiH which occurred on 7 February 2014 and which resulted in the burning of several governmental buildings. The protests affected the anniversary in different ways: first, they directly impacted several activities which were to take place on 8 February, the thirtieth anniversary of the opening ceremony in 1984: a planned Olympic party in the Olympic Village in Mojmiilo and the ceremonial opening of the thirtieth Sarajevo Winter Festival were cancelled, and the openings of exhibitions about Olympic Objects in the Historical Museum of BiH, as well as one about Olympic posters in the National Gallery were postponed.<sup>72</sup> Secondly, some organizers tried to use the Olympic anniversary to distance themselves from the protests. The Mayor of Sarajevo, Ivo Komšić, stated so at the occasion of the Torvill and Dean: “Tonight we will send new images of Sarajevo, different from the ones the world has been seeing in the past few days and different from what the world was watching twenty years ago”.<sup>73</sup> Third, protesters partially used Olympic symbols for their own cause: some employees of *ZOI '84*, with the popular Vučko costume, joined the daily, peaceful protests in Sarajevo which followed the violent outburst on 7 February.<sup>74</sup> Certain images circulated the social media, like the one opposing the Olympic rings from 1984 and the rings of Audi, which had become the symbol of the wealth and corruption of the criticized political class in BiH.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>71</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 24 January 2014; <http://www.ambafrance-ba.org/Renovation-du-musee-olympique-de>. Later in 2014, the EU Delegation declared to the OC BiH that it would provide other funds for the reconstruction of the Museum. Interview with representatives of the “Sarajevo heart of Europe” Foundation, Sarajevo, June and November 2014.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. *Oslobodjenje* 8 February 2014; *Dnevni list* 8 February 2014; *Oslobodjenje* 16 February 2014; <http://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/gradjani-olimpijskog-sela-se-okupljaju-u-povodu-30-godisnjice-zoi-a/140203103>

<sup>73</sup> <http://www.vijesti.ba/vijesti/bih/196850-Torvill-Dean-Sarajevu-nasi-zivoti-promijenili.html>

<sup>74</sup> *Oslobodjenje* 19 February 2014.

<sup>75</sup> Picture retrieved on Facebook, 11 February 2014. See also *Oslobodjenje* 20 February 2014, where journalist Boris Dežulović picks up the comparison between the Olympic rings and the Audi-rings.

But the use of references to the SWO during the protests remained quite discreet and did not become the dominating pattern, neither against nor in favor of the protests. The violence of 7 February overshadowed the thirtieth anniversary of the opening ceremony on 8 February, but one important part of the anniversary, the Olympic weekend, had already taken place a week earlier, and despite some security concerns the Torvill and Dean gala went on as planned.<sup>76</sup> In general, the activities of the thirtieth anniversary were less numerous and less spectacular than those for the twentieth anniversary. But at the same time they were much more integrated in a concrete perspective and reflected real cooperation not only within the OC BiH and between *ZOI '84* and OC Jahorina, but also, for the first time, between the two municipalities. What is also interesting concerning the thirtieth anniversary is that the main discourse related to the memory of the 1984 Winter Olympics had become very strongly depoliticized and became a discourse focusing on a local level. The narrative was no longer about bringing BiH together, or both entities, but mainly about connecting both Sarajevo municipalities.

## **6. Crossing the Inter-entity Line? The Use of Olympic Symbols in the Public Urban Space of Sarajevo and East Sarajevo**

The analysis of the anniversaries and of their evolution illustrates the importance of the SWO as an integrative symbol in BiH twenty years after the war. This can also be seen in the fact that the public remembrance of the SWO is not restricted to the anniversaries, but that the Olympic heritage is also present beyond the anniversaries both in Sarajevo and in East Sarajevo, even if this heritage doesn't have the same importance and is not necessarily used in the same way in both municipalities. In the municipality and the Sarajevo Canton, where the majority of the Olympic sites are situated, symbols related to the SWO are found in various parts of the urban landscape. Also in tourist billboards established a few years ago, many sites are explicitly designated as "Olympic", as for example "Skenderija, Olympic hall", "Bjelašnica, Olympic mountain", or Koševo as "Olympic stadium", together with the Olympic rings and the "Pahuljica" symbol.<sup>77</sup> Also, in the tourist center of Sarajevo, in Baščaršija, many shops sell souvenirs – such as t-shirts, cups, magnets and other objects – with symbols related to the SWO, especially the mascot, Vučko.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Interview with Christopher Bennett, Sarajevo, April 2014.

<sup>77</sup> Author's field observation, April 2014.

<sup>78</sup> The question of how the Olympic heritage is used or not for the touristic development of Sarajevo would require further analysis: To what extent are tourists interested in the Olympic heritage and to what extent are the town and tourism agencies using the Olympic Games in their tourism-strategies? And to what extent are the touristic approaches towards the Olympic heritage linked to the war-tourism or opposed to it?

In general, the Olympic past constitutes an important part of the self-identity of the town of Sarajevo.<sup>79</sup> In the territory of East Sarajevo, the symbolic use of the SWO is more limited and is mainly concentrated on Jahorina itself, where there is a “Hotel Vučko” and where souvenirs are sold in the hotel. But if it is, to date, rare to find the use of symbols in other parts of the municipality, currently there seems to be an evolution: in 2010, the municipality of Pale inaugurated a spacious square named “Olympic Park”, in the center of which stands a monument representing the “Pahuljica” symbol from 1984.<sup>80</sup> The municipality of Lukavica plans to inaugurate a similar monument on a square near a new sports hall, which is currently under construction for the EYOF 2017.<sup>81</sup> It can be expected that the EYOF, which is explicitly positioned as a continuation of the 1984 games, will further strengthen this kind of effort to celebrate the Olympic heritage in East Sarajevo as well.

That the Olympic heritage is used in both municipalities does not mean that it is always used in the same way. Sometimes in East Sarajevo, Olympic symbols are used by explicitly associating them with the RS: For example, in the reception hall of Hotel “Bistrica”, the headquarters of OC Jahorina, a figure of Vučko is wearing a scarf in the colors of the RS around his neck.<sup>82</sup> In Sarajevo, the memory of the Olympic Games is sometimes explicitly put in relation to the war, for example in the “Olympic city” siege map, which is sold at the Tunnel Museum in Sarajevo.<sup>83</sup> But neither one nor the other use are dominating patterns in the public urban space, and more often the Olympic symbols appear without any explicit political connotation in both Sarajevo and in East Sarajevo. The Olympic monument in Pale, for example, has no explicit association with the RS, neither in design nor in its inscription, which lists the names of athletes from Pale who participated at Winter Olympic Games from 1984 until 2010, and therefore emphasizes the local dimension of the Olympics.<sup>84</sup> Also the Olympic souvenir items sold in Bašćaršija and on Jahorina look very similar, even if those sold in Bašćaršija more systematically use the term

<sup>79</sup> See for example the title “The Winter Olympics are the most beautiful pages of the city’s history”, in *Dnevni avaz* 9 February 2014.

<sup>80</sup> <http://www.palalive.com/aktuelnosti-pale/svecano-otvoren-olimpijski-park-u-palama>

<sup>81</sup> Interview with Igor Golijanin, Lukavica, April 2014.

<sup>82</sup> Author’s field observation, May 2014.

<sup>83</sup> The map “Sarajevo, Olympic city 1984, Surrounded city 1992-1995” superposes the map of 1984 (with the different Olympic venues) and the lines of the siege from 1992-1995. Other examples: The Olympic Museum in Zetra show a documentary film from 1999 which emphasizes the fate of the Olympic facilities during the war (author’s field observation, April 2014).

<sup>84</sup> On the opening of the “Olympic park” in Pale in August 2010: <http://www.palalive.com/aktuelnosti-pale/svecano-otvoren-olimpijski-park-u-palama>

“Sarajevo 1984”.<sup>85</sup> Vučko is probably the best illustration that the Olympic heritage can be characterized more as a shared than as divided or even dividing heritage: he appears not only, in general, without political attribute, on souvenirs on Jahorina and in Bašćaršija, but is also officially used by ZOI '84 and by the OC Jahorina as a “costumed character”, in a very similar way and for similar sports activities where one of the organizations is involved. And wherever a costumed Vučko appears, he becomes the center of attraction for children and their parents who wish to get photographed with him.<sup>86</sup> Another example illustrating how much Vučko and the SWO can be considered not only as a *shared* memory, but also as a memory with a *connecting* potential, is the advertising campaign of the Jahorina-based “Hotel Vučko”. In the winter of 2014/5, the hotel, which is owned by Bojan Križaj (a famous Yugoslav ski star who participated also in the SWO 1984), launched the campaign in the main streets of Sarajevo with a poster featuring Križaj and Vučko, and stating: “Hotel Vučko and Bojan Križaj invite you to Jahorina”. This was the first big advertising campaign of a Jahorina-based hotel in the town of Sarajevo, and it is certainly not a coincidence that this public encouragement to the population of Sarajevo to cross the inter-entity line towards Jahorina was done with an appeal to the common memory in relation with the SWO.<sup>87</sup>

### **7. “An Event which All Carry as Positive Memory”: The SWO as Perceived by “Ordinary People” in BiH Today**

The quoted examples about the popularity of Vučko lead to the last part of this research by addressing the question to what extent the SWO can be seen today as a shared and partially connecting symbol not only on the level of official structures, media and the urban space, but also on the level of “ordinary people” living in Sarajevo and also in other parts of BiH. To tackle this question I will summarize some findings from a survey that I conducted between April and July 2014, where I asked people about their associations with the 1984 SWO and their opinions about the memory of this event.<sup>88</sup> The survey was conducted with ninety people from differ-

<sup>85</sup> Author’s field observation in Sarajevo and on Jahorina, February-April 2014.

<sup>86</sup> Author’s field observation in Sarajevo and on Jahorina, February-April 2014.

<sup>87</sup> Author’s field observation in Sarajevo, November 2014.

<sup>88</sup> The three questions were: “1. When you hear ‘Winter Olympic Games in 1984 in Sarajevo’, what do you associate with this? 2. In February 2014 the thirtieth anniversary of the Sarajevo Winter Olympics took place. Did you hear or read about / participate in activities linked to this anniversary? If yes, which one(s)? 3. Do you think that it makes sense to keep alive the memory of the ZOI 1984 today? If yes, why? If no, why not?” The respondents completed the questionnaire in written form or I interviewed them in person. Half of the ninety respondents were born before the SWO and half of them after 1984. Most of the interviewed persons were residing in

ent generations, born before or after the Games, living in Sarajevo, Banja Luka, East Sarajevo, or other towns in BiH. It doesn't pretend to be a representative survey, but there are, nevertheless, some interesting observations to be noted.

First observation: With one exception, all of the survey respondents could associate something with the term "SWO 1984", and the associations were never explicitly negative and very often positive or very positive, regardless of the town of residence and the age. The range of associations was wide, going from "Vučko" to single sports events, ceremonies, persons, and sites, from family souvenirs and atmospheric impressions to associations such as "unity", "better times", and "joy". The big majority also agreed that it is important to remember the Games today, qualifying the SWO as a particularly important, beautiful, and positive event which has meaning for many, even today. It is striking that the positive associations and opinions were articulated simultaneously by persons living in Sarajevo and in other towns, as well as by those who were born before 1984 and those born after the SWO, with the latter regularly evoking media and especially family narratives as sources of their knowledge and relationship to the SWO.

Second observation: Within the positive attitudes towards the SWO, the perception of the SWO as a non-polarizing, unifying factor holds an important place, which appears in the choice of an inclusive vocabulary: terms as "all", "everybody", "the whole of Yugoslavia", "all persons in BiH", "each Sarajevo", and "the entire world" were regularly used, as well as "we", "us", "our town", "our country", and "our region". The use of the latter terms can be interpreted as a desire to avoid categories with more potential political connotations, but at the same time as the expression of a desire to underline a sense of commonality, which to many the SWO seems to exemplify. "An event with which all were connected and which all carry as positive memory": this was an answer from a person born in Sarajevo after the Games and living today in Mostar that illustrates this vision, and is also an explicit indicator that people perceive not only the Games themselves, but also their memory today, as something which connects them. This quotation illustrates yet another perception which appears regularly in the answers: the Games and their memory are perceived as something connecting human beings, not political structures. This can be linked to the fact that respondents avoided using overly political categories in relation to the SWO, and if larger units were explicitly mentioned it was most often "Sarajevo", "Bosnia and Herzegovina", and "Yugoslavia", while the terms "Republika Srpska", "East Sarajevo", and "Federation" do not appear in the answers.

Sarajevo, in Banja Luka, and in East Sarajevo. The choice was done randomly: I asked persons whom I met in the street, and I asked persons I knew to transmit the questionnaire to acquaintances or colleagues.

Third observation: The most positive associations and opinions related to the SWO were found among persons who grew up in Sarajevo, before or after 1984, regardless of whether they are Serbs or Bosniaks, or if they are currently living in Sarajevo, East Sarajevo, or elsewhere. There are some significant differences between persons living in Sarajevo and living in cities in the RS: the first more often wrote “this was a great moment in the history of BiH”, while among the second, more people emphasized that it was “a great moment in the history of Yugoslavia”. At the same time, persons from Sarajevo and East Sarajevo both emphasized how important the Games were and are for the town of Sarajevo, which does not exclude their reference to BiH, Yugoslavia, or the region. And if persons from outside of Sarajevo more often emphasized the importance of the Games for bigger units as “BiH” or “Yugoslavia”, they also sometimes spoke about the past and/or present importance of the Games for the town of Sarajevo.

Fourth observation: The more critical opinions or distant attitudes were not about the SWO themselves, but largely about two particular aspects. Several people, especially from Sarajevo, felt that the Olympic heritage is not sufficiently glorified, and regretted or criticized that some of the destroyed Olympic sites have not been reconstructed. Others, especially those who live in Sarajevo but who did not grow up there, sometimes expressed their irritation at how much the inhabitants of Sarajevo cherish the memory of the Games, with one person qualifying this attachment as “exaggerated glorification of the past”. Only occasionally did anyone express the opinion that it is not important to remember the SWO “because today we have more important problems”. And only very rarely were there opinions articulated as an echo of divergences from the 1980s or from today: one person from Zenica, for example, wrote that her grandmother had talked about the jealousy of Belgrade towards Sarajevo in the 1980s because of the Games, and the same person mentioned that she heard in Zenica people telling her that “maybe Winter Olympics happened in Sarajevo, but without our effort and money we invested, they would have never had the Olympics”.

Fifth observation: Many answers evoked, explicitly or implicitly, the contrast between the SWO in 1984 and the situation today: joy then, depression now, dynamism then, lethargy now, solidarity then, egoism now, togetherness then, division now. These contrasting perceptions can also be seen as something common, as they can be found in answers from persons from different parts of BiH, and also from different generations. These dichotomic evocations are not necessarily linked with a nostalgic view, often, in fact, it is the contrary. Among the persons who evoked this contrast three attitudes are evident: those who just note this difference, and regret that it is like that; those who think that the situation is so bad today that nothing can be done about it, and that remembrance of the Games is therefore of no use; and those

who argue that the memory is important precisely because of this contrast, as the SWO can be a reminder and an inspiration for today, illustrating for example “what we are able to do”. This attitude was more often articulated than the first two ones.

Last observation: The activities for the thirtieth anniversary don’t seem to have attracted an overwhelmingly strong attention, even among persons living in Sarajevo. But more than half of the people interviewed, including in Banja Luka and Mostar, had at least heard about activities around the thirtieth anniversary, mainly through media, and some of them named concrete activities, for example the Torvill and Dean gala. In general, these answers seem to confirm that the thirtieth anniversary was not very spectacular but that it nevertheless contributed to maintaining a memory that seems very strongly rooted among many persons in BiH even if they didn’t follow actively the actual anniversary activities.

All in all, the answers to this small survey seem to confirm that the memory of the SWO has a highly integrative potential. Even if there are many different associations and attitudes which can be observed among those interviewed, the SWO-memories do not seem to be a polarizing or dividing factor. This does not exclude dissonant or critical voices around the memory of the SWO within the answers, but they remained rather limited and were mostly not articulated along ethnic lines, which echoes some of the findings related to the anniversary commemorations. The identification with the SWO appears particularly strong for people living in Sarajevo or from Sarajevo, but even in other towns of BiH the SWO seem to constitute mostly a positively connoted memory and symbol, and this is also the case for persons who were born after 1984. With that, the survey not only confirms that the SWO appear to be a transnational memory site in BiH, but adds that they can also be considered as a strong trans-generational memory. But a shared memory site is not necessarily also a connecting one, and the survey did not answer the question of the extent to which ordinary people from different parts and different generations in BiH not only have similar opinions about the SWO, but are *de facto* also communicating and meeting around the SWO-memories.

## **8. Conclusions: The integrative Potential of the 1984 SWO in BiH Today**

Recapitulating the analysis of the 1984 event itself and the various official anniversary commemorations from 1994 to 2014 allows us to trace the following evolution: from a (partially contested) symbol of a united Yugoslavia in 1984, to a symbol of destruction and division in 1994 within Yugoslavia and BiH, the SWO have again moved in the direction of a more integrative symbol. It is not necessarily a symbol connecting the whole of BiH, but currently at least connecting two municipalities above the entity lines on the basis of the common Olympic heritage. It will be instructive to follow further developments until the EYOF in 2017, to see whether the

organization of the EYOF will be challenged by political and financial problems, and also to see possible consequences on the political level if the project is successfully implemented. As the EYOF is the first strong cooperation initiative between Sarajevo and East Sarajevo since the war, one question is whether this joint project will have effects on the overall cooperation between the two cities. And as it is the first serious cooperation project on such an important logistical, financial, and symbolic level between two municipalities of the two different entities, another question is whether it will have some effect also on a more general level of cooperation between the two entities. It is already noteworthy that the two municipalities have successfully managed to obtain the support of the two entity-governments and of the state level for their joint project.<sup>89</sup> At the same time, the analysis of the historical development of the official SWO-memories and discourses has shown that there have been alternating phases, and there is no guarantee that the local connections, which are currently built around the Olympic heritage and the EYOF, could not be interrupted again depending on the political situation, as was the case in the years after the 2004 anniversary.

All in all, the memory of the SWO seems to have the potential to be a connecting factor, because it is a heritage with which both parts of Sarajevo widely identify and also because the traumatic 1992-1995 war experience and the current difficult social, economic and political situation in BiH make it an even more shining memory. What makes the SWO a very strong symbol is also that it relates to a vivid popular memory, in Sarajevo and East Sarajevo, but also in other parts of BiH, as well as in different generations, as indicated, for example, by the results of the survey I conducted. The fact that they have a strong popular base and that they are officially commemorated, independently from and even across political and ethnic division lines, gives the SWO an outstanding place in the culture of remembrance of contemporary BiH. Other sports symbols from Yugoslavia have partially survived the development of ethno-nationalism since the 1990s, but they have a difficult position in comparison to the more ethno-national symbols in the same domain (Mills, 2012; Perica, 2014). There are other symbols from popular culture of Yugoslavia, especially in the field of music, which are very popular across the post-Yugoslav sphere, but they remain outside of the field of official memory politics (Pauker, 2006). There have also been different attempts to build new common symbols in BiH in the public and political sphere, but they either failed or remained without any or with very little resonance (Pauker, 2012). The only exception might be the memorialization process of Srđan Aleksić since 2007, who is honored by media,

<sup>89</sup> Cp. City of Sarajevo and City of East Sarajevo, 2012: 19, 60-63. It will be interesting to observe in 2017 which representatives of state and entity level will (not) show up during the ceremonies.

civil society actors, and partially by official structures, and this across political and ethnic lines, but his memorialization is not uncontested within BiH and his degree of recognition remains limited.<sup>90</sup> In this context, the SWO can be considered currently as the only historical symbol that is simultaneously well-known, positively connoted and officially commemorated in various parts of BiH. At the same time this also indicates the limits of such a symbol, as it is legitimate to question the impact of one connecting factor in an environment dominated by dividing structures and symbols. But in such a divided society as BiH, it is already noteworthy that any symbol is able to transgress the dominant division lines. Significantly, in 2009 when an internet forum in BiH launched a debate about the question “Do we need a new flag for BiH?” an unknown author proposed an integrative emblem which included, within a shield, a combination of Bosnian Croat, Bosnian Serb, and Bosniak symbols – the checkerboard, the four S, and the crescent moon and star – and on the top of the shield the head of Vučko.<sup>91</sup> Vučko was presented as double-headed, looking in two different directions, which allows several interpretations: is it one head for each entity in order to embrace the entire BiH? Or is this supposed to express a certain confusion or schizophrenia regarding the situation in BiH? Regardless, the fact that Vučko was included on this connecting emblem is another illustration of how much Vučko, and with him the memory of the SWO, is seen as an integrative and connecting symbol in BiH.

Related to the question of the integrative potential of Olympic Games in general, the example of the 1984 SWO seems to underline that the remembrance of the Olympic Games can indeed be much more inclusive rather than divisive and polarizing within a society. But at the same time it would be difficult to derive general conclusions from the sole case of the SWO. It would be important to develop more research on the question of how other Olympic Games are remembered and which role the memory of Olympic Games plays in local, national, and international remembrance processes. Among the cases studied so far, the examples of Germany and Japan offer other interesting constellations concerning the sociopolitical role of the remembrance of Olympic Games. The 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin in relation to the Federal Republic of Germany present the case of a negative memory which German authorities and media tried to erase, or rather, to counterbalance by new Games, those in Munich in 1972 (Schiller and Young, 2010). The case of Japan is an example showing how the government and media try to build on positive

<sup>90</sup> Srđan Aleksić is a young Bosnian Serb soldier from Trebinje who in January 1993 rescued a Muslim acquaintance who had been attacked by other Bosnian Serb soldiers, and who was therefore killed by the latter. Cp. above footnote 2.

<sup>91</sup> <http://hercegbosna.org/forum/politika/da-li-treba-da-imamo-novu-drzavnu-zastavu-t2562-25.html> (see also: <http://banjalukain.com/zabava/prijedlog-za-grb-bih>).

memories from the 1964 Games in Tokyo and from Japanese successes at other Games in order to strengthen feelings of national pride (Niehaus, 2013). In comparison to this, the specific case of the remembrance of the SWO in BiH and the challenges linked with it appear even more clearly. The SWO do not constitute a negative memory, as did Berlin 1936 for the Federal Republic, but on the contrary a very positive one, but unlike post-war Japan, this memory is not situated within a nationally and politically widely homogenous environment.

Concerning the situation in BiH, one question remains, about the possible uses of the integrative potential of the SWO-memories in order to tackle divisions and to build up connections within BiH. On the basis of the observation that the Olympic heritage seems very positively connoted not only in Sarajevo but also in other parts of BiH, it might be suggested that more should be done with these memories in the political field. But what exactly and how? To simply commemorate the SWO for their own sake and as an end in itself would certainly lead nowhere, as would overly obvious political instrumentalizations of the remembrance. To link the memory of the SWO with concrete new projects and initiatives, as was done in 2004 with the Sports Law and the regional Memorandum, or as it is currently the case with the EYOF, is probably the most promising way to exploit the integrative potential of the SWO-memories. Another idea is to organize a new edition of the Winter Olympics in Sarajevo, a proposal which is currently not on the agenda of the OC BiH, but which continues to be evoked among ordinary people and also by politicians.<sup>92</sup> One often hears argument in favor of their organization with the positive example of the 1984 SWO, but at the same time it is legitimate to ask if the memory of the SWO would be an asset for the organization of new Winter Games. Should Sarajevo be in a position to organize new Winter Olympics, among all the challenges which are linked to the organization of such an event, the strong and positive memory of the 1984 SWO would very probably become one of the problems. Because, could the new Olympic Games stand up to the challenge of being as beautiful as the memory of the 1984 Games?

<sup>92</sup> In November 2012 for example, the politician and businessman Fahrudin Radončić declared that Sarajevo should be a candidate for the 2022 Winter Olympics, see *Dnevni avaz* 9 November 2012. Also in my survey the idea of new Winter Olympics in Sarajevo was articulated several times.

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