

Game playing in Montreal * ©

As Queen Elizabeth II formally opened the ceremonies and the gas-fired torch flared into life at trackside in Montreal's ribbed, concrete Olympic Stadium last week, the XXI Olympiad had already produced one record. For the first time since the modern Games began in 1896, a host country had imposed its own foreign policy on the event. The result was some indecorous sports brinkmanship that forced the angry withdrawal of a clearly ill-treated team from the island Republic of China, further strained U.S.-Canadian relations and left much of the remaining world bothered about what a West German newspaper called "a dangerous and discouraging precedent." Even many Canadians were unhappy with their Prime Minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, over his government's ham-fisted attempt to tamper with the world's premier sports event.

The introspective incident that became a full-blown diplomatic melodrama began quietly enough on May 17, when the Trudeau government received a blunt note from a capital that was not even represented at the Games: Peking. The mainland Chinese, who had stalked out of the International Olympic Committee in 1958 over the issue of Taiwan's representation, warned the Canadians that allowing the Taiwanese to attend the Olympics under their chosen name, the Republic of China, would violate the terms of Canada's recognition of Peking. (In 1970, Canada recognized the People's Republic, whereupon Taiwan severed ties with Canada.) Canada agreed-while balking at further Peking pressure to oust the Taiwanese entirely.

Unfortunately, it was not until late May that Ottawa got around to telling the IOC of its intentions. By that time, 42 Taiwanese ath-

letes were already packing their bags for Montreal. Told that Canada had something unpleasant in store for them, the group decided to come anyway; but only five members of the yachting team, who hold dual Taiwanese-U.S. citizenship, were able to cross the Canadian-US. border. The others would not be admitted, Ottawa announced, until Taiwan agreed to give up its formal designation, anthem and flag for the duration of the Games. Said Trudeau: "If (the athletes) come from Taiwan, they should come as Taiwan, not China. They're welcome as long as they don't masquerade as a country they're not."

By that time, the storm had already broken. IOC President Lord Killanin, an amiable former Irish journalist, charged Canada with violating a "fundamental" Olympic premise: "No discrimination is allowed against any country or person on the grounds of race, religion or political affiliation." Lord Killanin pointed out that even in 1936, when the Hitler regime threatened to make trouble over the appearance of Jewish and black athletes in Berlin, the Nazis decided not to tamper with the Games. Canada's objections had come far too late for the IOC to consider a change of venue for the Games. Declared Killanin: "It would appear that we've done everything possible to uphold our principles." The IOC's trump card, he added, was its moral stand. Nonetheless, the Canadians refused to budge.

The fracas became a crisis two weeks ago, when Taiwanese Spokesman Lawrence Ting said the delegation would refuse to accede to the Canadian demands. Following personal expressions of concern from President Gerald Ford, officials representing the 460-member U.S. Olympic team threatened withdrawal. Other teams expressed varying degrees of shock and outrage at Canada's behavior. Even the Canadian Olympic Committee called its governments's stand a "breach of faith."

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Not Acceptable

Nonetheless, Killanin began arranging a compromise. Just 48 hours before the opening of the Games last week, Canada agreed that Taiwan could keep its flag and its anthem as long as it dropped the name Republic of China and instead called itself simply Taiwan. That was still not acceptable to the Taiwanese, but the arrangement mollified U.S. representatives to the IOC who faced a revolt among their athletes if they went ahead with their threat of a U.S. boycott of the Olympics.

The Games have previously posed problems for the Taiwanese. In 1959 the IOC voted to eject the Chinese National Olympic Committee, as Taiwan's members were then known, in an initial attempt to add mainland China to the organization. In the 1960 Rome Games the Taiwanese participated under a compromise similar to the one they rejected last week. Later, the IOC accepted the name Republic of China, and in the 1964, 1968 and 1972 Olympics the Taiwanese took part under that designation.

One of Taiwan's difficulties with the 1976 Olympics was that this year, for the first time, the host country had formally recognized Peking. But patently, more than a scrupulous regard for formalities was behind Canada's rough treatment of Taiwan. Ottawa was surely sensitive to the fact that Peking is a major trading partner with which Canada had a healthy \$320 million trade surplus last year, mainly from wheat sales. Canada also has a variety of bilateral exchange agreements with the mainland regime. A certain amount of stupidity was also involved. Canada massively miscalculated the outcry that would follow its ultimatum; had Ottawa foreseen the uproar, it would probably have brought the issue to a head much earlier and backed down when resistance got stiff. What Ottawa did instead was continually to cite its original pledge to welcome all competing countries "pursuant to the normal

regulations." This interpretation of Canada's laws regulating foreign visitors has allowed Ottawa's officials to justify the stance they have now taken.

Gloomy Landmark

Now a precedent has been set, and many countries are fearful of its implications. For one thing, the 1980 Olympic Games are scheduled to take place in Moscow, and there is concern that the Soviet Union will take similar discriminatory action against athletes from Israel and West Germany. As if that were not enough to make the Montreal Games one of the gloomier landmarks in Olympic history, a further explosive political issue cast a pall over the event. Led by Tanzania, 18 Black African countries made good on their threat to boycott Montreal, along with five Arab neighbors. Their complaint was the IOC refusal to ban New Zealand from the Games after that country sent a rugby team to South Africa, which has been banned from Olympic competition since 1968 because of its racial policies.

