



Direct political interference in the Olympics similar to a Friday night poker game-with Clark as the dummy.

The recent crisis in Afghanistan has prompted the United States to threaten the Soviet Union with a variety of reprisals ranging from economic sanctions to supplying arms to Afghan rebels and neighbouring Pakistan. Surely the most ludicrous development to date has been President Carter's expressed wish to keep the U.S. out of the Olympic games if Soviet forces are not withdrawn. At the very least Carter hopes to have the games postponed or moved to an alternate site. As expected, Prime Minister Joe Clark concurs.

While the Soviet military action is an unquestionable violation of detente, it is not, by any means, unprecedented. Witness the U.S. involvement in Chile, Korea, Iran and Southeast Asia. However, if the consensus is that Communism - and particularly the corrupt form found in the U.S.S.R. - is to be suppressed at all costs, then obviously some firm stand must be taken by the western world.

But why involve sports? The answer is that sports have

long been an outlet for nationalistic fervor. In 1945, British author George Orwell, in an essay entitled *The Sporting Spirit* aptly described athletic competition on an international scale as "war without shooting."

Never was this attitude more evident than during the 1936 summer Games in Berlin. In a book entitled *The Olympic Games*, edited by John Rodda and Lord Killanin, the mood was described this way:

"...the overall memory of the 1936 Games was the "Deutschland uber alles" atmosphere engendered by Hitler and the Nazis. Everywhere the eye was affronted by flags upon flags, bearing the crooked cross, like so many weeds among the flower beds of less provocative devices: everywhere the ear was assailed by loud-speakers playing martial music or relaying the hysterical 'Sieg heil' responses of the thoughtless multitudes to the appearance of the Fuhrer."

Within the bounds of our own memories we can recall the intensely partisan feelings evoked by the first, and to a lesser extent the ensuing, Team Canada vs U.S.S.R. confrontations. No one could argue that it was merely a test of skill between two teams of twenty men dressed in different coloured uniforms. It was, purely and simply, a clash between ideologies - the validity of our Western lifestyle was being put to the test. And when our team happened to lose a game, rationalizations abounded: the refereeing was bad; the rink was a funny shape; the Russians weren't hockey players - they were MACHINES!

International sport in particular the Olympic games, weren't always this fiercely partisan. They began as straightforward man to man competitions. Naturally some measure of nationalism was involved, but it did not result in the kind of animosity and aggression we see today. As nationalism grew, so did the importance of

sports. Governments began to pour money into athletic development programs. Athletes were selected at progressively younger and younger ages for training as Olympic competitors. The return came in the form of an increase in national pride for those countries clever or fortunate enough to come up with winners.

It is apparent that the Olympics have become much more than a global track meet and anyone who purports that they are just that is fooling nobody but himself. Still, direct political interference in the running of the Games would be intolerable. The example set by President Carter's proposed boycott would open the door for similar abuse by other nations in future Olympiads and could well spell the end for a time honoured tradition. In sports like anything else, ideals - tarnished though they may be - must be defended. The Olympic games may not be as pure as driven snow but let's at least try to keep them a respectable off-white.