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NEWLY FOUND DOCUMENTS CONCERNING THE DECISION OF THE BULGARIAN OLYMPIC COMMITTEE ABOUT THE OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY THROUGH BULGARIA IN 1972

Emilia Vitanova

OPEN ACCESS National Sports Academy “Vassil Levski”, Sofia, Bulgaria

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ORCID 

Emilia Vitanova

<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-8415-4818>

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ABSTRACT

The Munich Olympic Games in 1972 were organized and held in the atmosphere of political and ideological controversies, which directly affected the organization and the Olympic Torch Relay along the route Olympia – Munich. This article aims to present newly found evidence about Bulgaria’s participation in planning the overall route of the Olympic Torch Relay across the country.

The manuscript includes various documents and scientific and popular publications systematized through content analysis, comparative analysis, and critical analysis. In the course of the research, we also found 32 articles in periodicals. We researched some books and publications by foreign and Bulgarian authors, documents preserved in the regional libraries, the central state archive, the regional archives, and the archives of the Bulgarian Union for Physical Culture and Sport (BUPCS) and “Bulgarian Photography”.

The research traced the difficulties and influences making the Bulgarian Olympic Committee (BOC) doubtful about the organization of the Olympic Torch Relay. On the basis of the newly found documents, we can have a clearer view of the political and ideological influences on BOC determining the decision on this matter.

Keywords: *Olympic Torch Relay, Munich Olympic Games 1972, Bulgarian Union for Physical Culture and Sport, Bulgarian Olympic Committee*

INTRODUCTION

The Olympic Flame is an unconditional universal human symbol, popular among people all over the world, which is quite spectacular during the Olympic Games, watched by millions of spectators.

In his publication related to the Olympic philosophy and turning sport into “a platform for peace”, Konstantinos Georgiadis and Ange-

los Syrigos (Georgiadis, Syrigos, 2009) pointed out that lighting and carrying the Olympic Flame is the most significant modern trend – a symbol of the ancient Olympic Games uniting past and present and establishing the Olympic core values among athletes and communities. One of the respected researchers of the Olympic movement, Conrado Durantez, said:

„The new Olympic symbol and the ceremony appeared to overcome all the differences, overcoming great obstacles, and reaching national borders. Here is how Greek people, who loved symbolism, showed how youth is bound to maintain their ancestors’ power and spirit, and after their task is fulfilled, to hand out the debt to the young generations.” (Durantez, 1985)

Some thoughts about the meaning of the publication (Yalouri, 2010). Here, the Flame Olympic Flame can be found in Yalouri’s is presented as a universal and emotional at-

traction center for all people who have their own perception of its meaning. We should pay attention to the possibility of its use and adaptability to various historical and political situations as an instrument for enforcing different messages and influences on society. That is why the development of the Olympic Games has shown some changes in the organization of the Olympic Torch Relay, which attracts more people and organizations and has a more prominent social effect on society. Maguire, Blake, and Darlington (Maguire et al., 2015) viewed the Olympic Torch Relay as a symbol of intercultural understanding.

As early as the first Modern Olympic Games, the Bulgarian Olympic Committee (BOC) became a very respectable partner in the Olympic Movement and IOC because of its members' activities and the excellent organization related to the Olympic Torch Relay through Bulgaria. For this reason, its decisions and actions during the communist regime in the country and the strong ideological influence of the time were rather tricky, provided it wanted to preserve its authority. The ideology came from the USSR, and all the countries under Soviet influence were obliged to follow it.

Social and political circumstances related to holding the Munich Olympic Games in 1972.

The establishment of the political system in Bulgaria after 1944 was determined by the outcome of the negotiations among Great Britain, the USA, and the USSR. The decision was that the country should remain under the influence of the USSR. The occupation of the Soviet Army set the beginning of the communist regime, which followed the political program of turning Bulgaria into a satellite country similar to the other Soviet Republics.¹ A Soviet type of social system was built in Bulgaria,

including in the field of sports. There were two suggestions in 1962 and 1973, coming from CC and BCP, for Bulgaria's joining the USSR as a satellite country. In this sense, the whole social, political, and cultural life in the country was governed according to the directions and interests of Moscow.

The essence of communistic ideology and government model holds only one truth regarding all social, cultural, political, and economic issues. All institutions and organizations must obey it.

In this case, the communistic ideology viewed the Olympic Movement as a bourgeoisie ideology, i.e., rival ideology. Because of that, all elements and symbols of the Olympic Movement were considered rival and hidden bourgeoisie propaganda.

The significance of the Olympic Games in 1972 was assessed differently as regarded the internal development of sport as a phenomenon of the 20th century and from a political point of view - as an instrument for opposition – the assault and murder of Israeli athletes, which led to the crisis during the Games. This manuscript presents the Communist Block's point of view regarding the ideological antagonism between the East and the West based on the published original documents illustrating the arguments and viewpoints of the communist regimes in the Eastern Block about the role of the Olympic games as a battlefield and opposition and as a struggle for ideological and propaganda influence.²

In 1972, when the world accepted the idea of "peaceful co-existence" between the two rival systems of communism and capitalism, sports activities were the area of compromise and a wide range of political and propaganda struggles. The hidden hostile attitude of the Bulgarian ruling elite to the Olympic idea gradually led to a careful and persistent eradi-

¹ Collective works "Bulgaria in the sphere of Soviet interests" (Bulgarian -Russian scientific discussions), Publisher "Prof. Marin Drinov" Sofia, 1998, Znepolski Ivailo, Bulgarian Communism. Sociocultural characteristics and power trajectory, Chapter VII Soviet Bulgaria, Sofia 2012.

² State Security and Sport, Part 1 – Olympic Movement, Collected documents, Sofia, 2014

cation of the educational role of sport. Instead, the education and propaganda in sport turned some Olympic elements and ideas into ideological slogans and values of communism.

In the 1970s, there was a growth in the development of sports and the Olympic Movement in Bulgaria. Turning sport into a state policy aimed at showing the advantages of communist society to the world and using its achievements for propaganda made people think Bulgaria strode along the right communist path and could face bourgeois political influences.

Those social, economic, and political trends just before the Munich Olympic Games in 1972 were also negatively influenced by the worsened Soviet-German relations based on political and ideological rivalry³. That circumstance created an unexpected crisis regarding the ritual of the Olympic Torch Relay in 1972. It became a political issue and placed the IOC, which wanted to preserve its image and authority, in a challenging position. The IOC struggled to fulfill the critical mission of a moderator between the communist states and the International Olympic Movement. According to the IOC decision, the Munich Olympic Games in 1972 provoked the USSR to overcome its hostile attitude towards Germany and the Western World.

Review of publications on the topic

The first group of sources related to this research is publications by foreign researchers (Hanley, 1996; Platonova, 2009; Borgers, 2005). These authors published information about ancient rituals in lighting the sacred flame, modern re-establishment, and the development of the ceremonies accompanying the Olympic Torch Relay along the route from

Olympia to Munich in 1972. In Durantez's research (Durantez, 1988), the author described in detail the organization, route, and participants in the Olympic Torch Relay. The most information on the topic can be found in the official report about the Olympic Games in Munich⁴. The report states the problems concerning outlining the route, the refusals, and the acceptance of Bulgaria to participate in this activity, as well as brief information about taking and handing out the Flame on Bulgarian territory.

In other publications (Meranzov, 2008; Meranzov et al., 1974; Haralampiev & Georgiev, 1979; Bardareva, 2008; Petrova, 1985; Gocheva, 1980), despite the detailed analysis of Bulgaria's participation in XX Olympic Games in Munich, there is no information and analysis about the important issue of the Olympic Torch Relay through Bulgaria in 1972.

We found some information about the Olympic Torch Relay through Bulgaria in 1972 in some periodicals, which provoked our research interest because they had not been a research subject so far.

Trendafil Martinski – chairman of the Bulgarian Union for Physical Culture and Sport (BUPCS), playing the role of the Ministry of Sport from 1957 to 1989, wrote in his biography that Bulgaria's decision to accept the Olympic Flame was unanimous: "As a sign of respect to the Olympic Games, we granted our approval and cooperated for the Olympic Torch Relay through Bulgaria. The Flame spent the night at Golden Sands" (Martinski, 2002). These words made us want to find more evidence showing the scope of political influence on the development of the BOC and the Olympic Movement in Bulgaria⁵.

³ The official report of the Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXth Olympiad Munich 1972

⁴ The official report of the Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXth Olympiad Munich 1972

⁵ Martinski. T., (2002), My life in sport, pp. 382-383 „I worked and lived in a time when a party, in the name of noble aims, had assumed the right to rule in an unappealable way the whole society and the country... This mod-

One of the researchers of the Olympic Movement in Bulgaria, Prof. Lozan Mitev (Mitev, 2014), presented partial information about the organization of the Olympic Torch Relay. He emphasized that the organizers' main idea when tracing the route through our country was related to pointing out Bulgaria's economic and sports advances without placing too much importance on the Olympic symbols and principles.

The establishment of the authority of Bulgaria as a world sports power happened during the Munich Olympic Games in 1972. In that Olympic year, one of the significant events before the Games, which is not well described in our sports history, was meeting the Olympic Flame. After 36 years, the Flame passes through Bulgaria again from the 9th to the 13th of August. Unlike in 1936, this great cultural event was met with hostility on behalf of the ruling elite, who made an attempt to isolate it from public attention. The reasons behind that were purely political. They were related to the tense relations between Bulgaria and Greece, which at that time was governed by a military junta, and the negative attitude toward the Federal Republic of Germany due to ideological reasons. In this sense, the wide broadcasting and popularizing of the event was considered political propaganda in favor of those countries.

The above facts made us believe that the circumstances around the Olympic Torch Relay through Bulgaria in 1972 were not researched in detail, and there was a gap in Bulgaria's Olympic history and culture. That is why this research will shed more light on the organization and holding of this significant Olympic event through the study and analysis of information found in state archives and publications in periodicals. We will attempt to reconstruct the events of that time, which left a trace in the development of the Olympic Movement.

Aim of the research

The aim of this research was to present new information revealing the circumstances around the decision on the Olympic Torch Relay through Bulgaria for the Olympic Games in 1972.

The main tasks of this research were related to:

1. Research and systematization of histor-

ical materials in the State archives and publications in periodicals related to the organization and the Olympic Torch Relay in 1972.

2. Historical reconstruction of the events related to the discussion about the Olympic Torch Relay through Bulgaria in 1972.
3. Analysis of newly found documents revealing the circumstances around BOC's decision on the Olympic Torch Relay through Bulgaria in 1972.

METHODS

This research encompassed several major areas of collecting information – research of foreign literary sources, examination of all publications by Bulgarian researchers and historians in the field of sport and the Olympic Movement in Bulgaria, and a review of all preserved Bulgarian periodicals from 1972. We carried out research in the historical archive of the National Sports Academy “Vassil Lev-

el did not exclude sports organizations. It served supreme party leaders in ruling and interfered harshly in the work of BUPCS. ...Now I realize it was a wrong approach which disparaged the role of public organizations, BUPCS in particular, and led to breaches of its amateur character and statute.”

ki”, the Central State Archive, the Regional State Archives, and the regional libraries and regional historical museums.

Methodologically, all the information we found in scientific and popular sources was systematized and analyzed with the so-called content analysis, comparative analysis, and critical analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Newly found information sources

Information on the research topic was found in the Central State Archive (CSA), Central Party Archive (CPA), regional state archives, BUPCS archives, and “Bulgarian Photography” archives. We found 11 documents. Part of them concerns the discussions between BOC and IOC about the Olympic Torch Relay⁶, and other documents concern organization issues⁷ related to the relay through our country⁸. Some of the documents were most probably lost or destroyed over time. Because of this, there is not enough evidence about the organization and the torch relay through the regions of Haskovo, Burgas, and Razgrad. In the state archives of the towns of Yambol⁹, Sliven¹⁰, Russe¹¹, and Shumen,¹² we found some negatives of pictures (found and developed 140 photos) which show not only the persons, moods, emotions, and publicity of the event but also provide information about various organizational issues. On the other hand, the archives in Russe and Sliven preserve documents providing detailed information about the organization of the Olympic

Torch Relay. These valuable documents show that the whole preparation was aimed at “agitation and propaganda” of the socialistic government model. The information found in the documents confirms the high level of organization achieved by the local committees based on preliminary plans, coordination of actions between the different regions, local structures and sports clubs, and high responsibility and discipline while performing the tasks.

The second group of information sources about the Olympic Torch Relay is articles in local and national periodicals – 32 articles were found. These periodicals include the newspaper “Dimitrovska Pravda” (1 article), newspaper “Dnevnik” (1 article), “Dunavska Pravda”(3 articles), “Ekip”(1 article), “Naroden Drugar” (2 articles), “Narodno Delo” (3 articles), “Naroden Sport” (6 articles), “Novo Ludogorie” (3 articles), “Polet” (1 article), “Septemvri” (1 article), “Slivensko Delo” (1 article), “Haskovska Tribuna” (5 articles), “Chernomorski Front” (2 articles), and the newspaper “Shumenska Zaria” (2 articles). The articles include partial information about organizational issues related to the preliminary preparation published about a week before the torch relay through the different regions and information about the number of participating athletes, the organization of the celebrations, etc. The major topics discussed in the articles concern the names of the athletes who took and handed out the Olympic Flame, the flag carriers who lit the cauldron, the names of the official guests, and the route through the regions.

⁶ Central State Archive (CSA), f.№1b, inv.36, arch. item 1752

⁷ Central State Archive, f.№1447, inv. №28, arch. item №1002

⁸ State Archive - Russe, f.№778, inv.2, arch. item173

⁹ State Archive - Yambol, f 1009, inv.1, arch. Item 3

¹⁰ State Archive – Sliven, f 656 inv.7 arch. Item 816, 817

¹¹ State Archive – Russe, f № 720, inv. 5, arch. item 88;

Fund № 788 / Regional center for photo propaganda and photo services - Russe (1949-1999) Inv. № 8

Fund № 778 / regional Council of BUPCS - Russe (1958-1987), Inv. № 2

¹² Fund № 1652 / Pavlov, Boris Vankov (1922-), Inv. № 1, Arch. item № 81

Fund № 1003 / Regional Center for photo propaganda and photo services – Shumen (1951-2002), inv. №11

The hardships in the political debates related to the Olympic Torch Relay through Bulgaria for the Munich Olympic Games in 1972.

On the 3rd of April 1970, the IOC sent a letter to the BOC. The organizational committee of the XX Olympic Games in Munich offered Bulgaria to take part in the Olympic Torch Relay in 1972¹³. This offer was directed to be discussed on the highest state and political level and was debated at the Central Committee of the ruling communist party (CC of BCP). This type of political interference in the BOC activities was due to the particular conditions of the political system and the government of the country, which, according to Article 1 of the Constitution of NRB (National Republic of Bulgaria), determined “the leading role of NRB in all public spheres”, placing all public organizations in the role of appendage to the ideological and political system. In this sense, the discussion about the Olympic Torch Relay through Bulgaria in 1972 was one of the most significant evidence of the political influence on the development of the sports movement in our country.

Based on the IOC’s letter, and after the approval granted by the CC of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and the department “Foreign Politics and International Relations” of the CC of BCP¹⁴ in April 1970, “the Olympic Flame could pass through our country”. In the beginning, our country accepted the offer. The reason was that Bulgaria bordered Greece and would participate together with the other Balkan countries with whom it was in good

sports relationships (Turkey, Romania, Yugoslavia). Among the other reasons were the established sports culture of the Bulgarian people, BOC’s obligations to the IOC stated in the Olympic Charter, the government’s aspiration that the country was part of the world sport, and the Olympic Movement. A noteworthy circumstance was the fact that Bulgaria would host the Olympic Congress in 1973 in the city of Varna.

The Olympic Congress in Varna was held a year after the Olympic Torch Relay passed through Bulgaria. There were significant changes over that year regarding the Soviet attitude towards the Olympic movement. That immediately influenced the BOC’s concept and politics, which had always been in unison with the decisions and positions of the Sports Movement and the governing structures of the USSR. In this sense, the analysis of the significance of the X Olympic Congress did not reflect directly on all the issues related to Bulgarian politics regarding the Olympic Torch Relay in 1972.

Willi Daume’s letter (member of the IOC and chairman of GOC and the German Sports Union about the Olympic Torch Relay through Bulgaria) was discussed during a meeting of the committee of the sports leaders from the socialistic countries led by the USSR in Moscow on 15.12.1970 and during the meeting of the sports leading unions from the socialist countries (20-22.12.1970 in Varna¹⁵). Based on the discussions during those two meetings, a decision was taken that the Olympic Flame would be carried along the shortest route from Greece to FRG, not passing through Bulgaria

¹³ Reference about our country’s participation in the Olympic torch relay for XX Olympic Games in Munich, 1972, The documents of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party are now stored in Central State Archive, f.1B. This means that CPA, f. 1 now is CSA, f. 1B., inv.38, arch. Item 465

¹⁴ CC of BCP was the supreme authority of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP). BCP was a political party in Bulgaria which ruled the country from 1944 to 1990.

¹⁵ Reference from 12 June 1971 about Bulgaria’s participation in the Olympic Torch Relay for XX Summer Munich Olympic Games in 1972, The documents of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party are now stored in Central State Archive, f.1B. This means that CPA, f. 1 now is CSA, f. 1B, inv.38, arch. item 465

or through other communist countries such as Romania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and FRG.

On 6.01.1971, the chairman of BUPCS (who, in fact, was a representative of the political government of sport in Bulgaria) and

We regret that the BOC cannot, due to valid reasons, organize the torch relay on Bulgarian territory¹⁸

We should point out that the letter was sent to the IOC after a meeting of the sports leaders in Moscow, where the guidelines of the political government of sport in the USSR were taken into consideration. The decisions concerned the refusal of other countries as well, such as Hungary and Czechoslovakia, who

The BOC had granted its official agreement. Afterwards, we planned everything, and now we cannot possibly make any changes. We cannot see the slightest reason for this refusal concerning sport. We would regret it if the National Olympic Committee, which has to organize the next Olympic Congress, impedes the Olympic Torch Relay in such a way.¹⁹

This issue was on the agenda of the meeting on 16.01.1971 of representatives of the National Olympic Committees from Greece, Turkey, Romania, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Austria. All the participants in that meeting stated that Willi Daume had to do everything possible to make Bulgaria reconsider its decision.

The chairman of the IOC, Avery Brundage, also expressed *“his amazement and regret and hoped to make the BOC reconsider its decision personally”²⁰*. He sent a letter to the

vice-chairman of the BOC, Trendafil Martinski,¹⁶ sent a letter to Willi Daume,¹⁷ stating our country’s refusal to take part in the Olympic Torch Relay:

also refused to accept the Olympic Flame.

On 11.01.1971, Willi Daume (chairman of the Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games) sent a letter to General Vladimir Stoichev expressing his bewilderment about our refusal:

Organizing Committee in Bulgaria expressing his hopes that Bulgaria would change its decision: *“I count on your cooperation in the Olympic Torch Relay from Greece to Munich. This flame would not pass through Berlin. Greetings”²¹*.

On 18.01.1971, France Press published an article presenting the existing problems concerning Bulgaria’s participation in the Olympic Torch Relay. That fact ruined our country’s image in front of the whole world.

¹⁶ Martinski, T. (2002), My life in sport, In his autobiography, Trendafil Martinski emphasized the leading role of BUPCS in the government of the Bulgarian sport under the guidance of BCP. Martinski wrote that during that period, the BOC had restricted functions mainly related to cultural enlightenment activities.

¹⁷ Willi Daume – Chairman of the Organizing Committee of XX Munich Olympic Games in 1972.

¹⁸ Letter from Trendafil Martinski to Willi Daume about Bulgaria’s refusal to participate in the Olympic Torch Relay, The documents of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party are now stored in Central State Archive, f.1B. This means that CPA, f. 1 now is CSA, f. 1B, inv.38, arch. Item 465

¹⁹ Letter from Willi Daume to General Vladimir Stoichev, 11.01.1971, The documents of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party are now stored in Central State Archive, f.1B. This means that CPA, f. 1 now is CSA, f. 1B, inv.38, arch. item 465

²⁰ Announcement of the chairman of the Organizing Committee concerning Bulgaria, published in France Press on 18 January, The documents of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party are now stored in Central State Archive, f.1B. This means that CPA, f. 1 now is CSA, f. 1B, inv.38, arch. Item 465

²¹ Letter from Avery Brundage to BOC about the Olympic Flame, The documents of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party are now stored in Central State Archive, f.1B. This means that CPA, f. 1 now is CSA, f. 1B, inv.38, arch. Item 465

It was written in Daume's letter from 19.01.1971 to Trendafil Martinski that was the only case like this in the history of the Olympic Games and that:

„such an attitude wouldn't correspond to the Bulgarian Olympic tradition and the friendly sports relationships between our two committees. Unfortunately, you did not state the reasons for such a decision". It is rumored that a particular party spreads libels that the Organizing Committee is planning that the torch relay will pass through Western Berlin on its way from Greece to Munich. There is not a single accurate word in this libel, and we have never had such an intention."

In this letter, Willi Daume again expressed his diplomatic attitude as chairman of the Olympic Organizing Committee. He continued his goodwill in corresponding with the BOC to help Bulgaria make the right "Olympic decision"²².

Obviously, the issue was of great political importance because, after exchanging those letters and some announcements in the me-

dia, there was another meeting of the CC of BCP. The fact that the Olympic Torch Relay was discussed by the government's supreme political and ideological structure in the country shows that the Olympic Torch Relay was turned into an important political issue.

The report from 18.02.1971, presented by Genov at the meeting of the CC of BCP, states:

*„We believe that the right thing would be to agree with the Olympic Torch Relay passing through our country. The supposed route will go through Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Austria, and Munich. We have no apprehension that the flame will be used for political purposes along this route. Our decision is supported by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Department "Foreign Politics and International Relations" of the CC of BCP."*²³

At a meeting on 18.02.1971 of the CC of BCP, the agenda included the Olympic Torch Relay throughout the country.

*„We find it advisable that we offer the other central committees of fraternity parties observing the work in the field of physical culture to revise their decision, taken at the meeting in Moscow, to reject the Olympic Torch Relay through the territories of the socialist countries. If the relay does not pass through Western Berlin, our government thinks it is logical to grant its approval for the Olympic Torch Relay going through some socialist countries."*²⁴

This means there might be some unofficial additional political consultations with the party bodies of the socialist countries about the Olympic Torch Relay, which were crucial for

determining Bulgaria's position. Some letters were sent to the governing parties of the socialist countries (from 18.02.1971) inquiring about their consent concerning the Olympic

²² Letter from Willi Daume to Martinski related to the change in the decision about participation in the Olympic Torch Relay, The documents of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party are now stored in Central State Archive, f.1B. This means that CPA, f. 1 now is CSA, f. 1B, inv.38, arch. Item 465

²³ Report from S. Genov (Head of the department "Organizing Committee of CC of BCP) from 18 February 1971 about giving consent that the Olympic Torch Relay for the XX Olympic Games in 1972 pass through Bulgaria, The documents of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party are now stored in Central State Archive, f.1B. This means that CPA, f. 1 now is CSA, f. 1B, inv. 28, arch. Item 466

²⁴ Report „A“ № 111 of the meeting of the Political Bureau of the CC of BCP on 18 February 1971.

Torch relay through Bulgaria. The Czechoslovakian, Polish, and Hungarian representatives replied they had no objections against the Olympic Torch Relay through our country. The Soviet representatives replied there should be an additional meeting. The representatives of the GDR were also of the opinion that in order to make a final decision, the other members of the meeting in Moscow at the end of 1970 should vote for that. As we can see in all official documents presented up to this moment about the process of decision taking, the BOC was ignored as an institution.

The issue related to Bulgaria's rejection to accept the Olympic Torch Relay led to a reaction on behalf of Willi Daume²⁵, who questioned the prestige and authority of the BOC. Right after Bulgaria had sent its decision to the IOC, Willi Daume offered "a personal meeting expressing his bewilderment that the country would host the Olympic Congress but did not want to participate in the Olympic Torch Relay". He insists that "the BOC revise its opin-

ion before turning to the IOC"²⁶.

Until then, the BOC did not answer Willi Daume and Brundage. A piece of evidence for that is the letter from 22.02.1971 written by General Stoichev to Sabotin Genov, which informed him that the BOC had received another alarming letter from 16 February 1971 from Willi Daume to the BOC, where they again wanted to reconsider the decision and to hold urgent discussions about setting the route.²⁷

In the heat of this discussion, Vladimir Stoichev²⁸, chairman of the BOC, besides his political orientation to the ruling power in Bulgaria, had the great moral responsibility to present authentic documents for taking wholesome and unburdened doctrine decision supporting the Olympic Torch Relay through our country in accordance with the Olympic values and the noble mission of sport. He sent a letter on 10.03.1971 to Boris Velchev, a member of the Political Bureau and a secretary of the CC of BCP, about the Olympic Flame, where he wrote:

I insistently ask you to do everything possible to avoid ruining the BOC's image and the image of our sport gained with great efforts during the years after the Liberation from Hitler's fascism before the sporting world.

At the meeting of the Executive Committee of the International Olympic Committee in Lozana, where I have to be present in relation to the Olympic Congress in 1973 in Sofia, I will put all my efforts into wiping out the negative impression created by the delay in our response....²⁹

²⁵ Reference about the participation of our country in the torch relay for XX Munich Olympic Games in 1972, The documents of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party are now stored in Central State Archive, f.1B. This means that CPA, f. 1 now is CSA, f. 1B, inv. 38, arch. Item 465

Letter from Willi Daume to the BOC about the organization of the Olympic Torch Relay through Bulgaria, 14.04.1971, The documents of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party are now stored in Central State Archive, f.1B. This means that CPA, f. 1 now is CSA, f. 1B, inv.38, arch. Item 465

²⁶ Reference about the participation of our country in the torch relay for XX Summer Munich Olympic Games in 1972г., The documents of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party are now stored in Central State Archive, f.1B. This means that CPA, f. 1 now is CSA, f. 1B, inv.38, arch. Item 465

²⁷ Letter from Willi Daume to the BOC and Trendafil Martinski about a meeting for a discussion of the route of the Olympic Flame, 16.02.1971, The documents of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party are now stored in Central State Archive, f.1B. This means that CPA, f. 1 now is CSA, f. 1B, inv. 38, arch. Item 465

²⁸ General Vladimir Stoichev was chairman of the BOC from 1952 to 1982. In 1952, he was elected to be a member of the IOC until 1987.

²⁹ Letter from General Vladimir Stoichev to Boris Velchev (a member of the Political Bureau and secretary of the CC of BCP about the Olympic Torch Relay, 10 March 1971, The documents of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party are now stored in Central State Archive, f.1B. This means that CPA, f. 1 now is CSA,

Willi Daume sent a letter again³⁰ to the BOC on 14.04.1971, pointing out a significant fact: our country would host the Olympic Congress. Still, at the same time, it refused to participate in the Olympic Torch Relay.

We kindly ask you to understand that the issue should now be decided because the relay preparation cannot be postponed any further. The participating countries blame us for this. The case will go on the agenda of the European National Olympic Committees meeting on the 7th and 8th of May in Vienna, where we have to report on all the issues related to the torch relay and settle the final details.

To take a final decision on this matter, Sabotin Genov and Trendafil Martinski took part in a special meeting of the countries-participants in the torch relay. This meeting was held in the GDR on 6.05.1971.³¹

The secretarial board of the CC of GUSP accepted the information by Sabotin Genov and Trendafil Martinski about the route of the Olympic Torch Relay, discussed the issue, and made the following conclusions:

1. *There are no serious reasons for changing the decision from 15.12.1971.*
2. *The Olympic Committee has not decided on the route, which does not oblige us to reconsider the matter. We have received an offer only from the GFR.*
3. *Some difficulties our country would experience regarding holding the next IOC congress in Bulgaria are viewed separately from the current issue of the route of the Olympic Torch Relay.*

This document proves that the CC of the German United Socialist Party had no interest in the Bulgarian issue and had no eloquent and strong arguments convincing enough to make Bulgaria agree with them. On the other hand, it can be seen that the BOC was totally isolated from the discussions concerning the Olympic Torch relay. It is essential to point out that the correspondence between Willi Daume and the BOC was made only with Trendafil Martinski, who was vice-chairman of the BOC and chairman of the Central Council of BUPCS, and not with General Vladimir Stoichev himself, who was chairman of the BOC and a member of the IOC. The letter said that perhaps if there had been a change in the opinion of the BOC, there might have been a change in the position of GUSP on this issue.

A reference for possible consequences for our country for not taking part in the Olympic Torch Relay was published on 10.05.1971³². It said that our refusal would be accepted as an act dictated by consideration unrelated to sport, i.e., *“by political considerations and consequently, as an anti-Olympian act directed against the Olympic ideas and principles.”* Some other arguments were also mentioned:

- This refusal was accepted as a political deci-

f. 1B, inv.38, arch. Item 465

³⁰ Letter from Willi Daume to BOC about the organization of the Olympic Torch Relay through Bulgaria, 14.04.1971, The documents of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party are now stored in Central State Archive, f.1B. This means that CPA, f. 1 now is CSA, f. 1B, inv.38, arch. Item 465

³¹ Memorial note by K. Atanasov about decisions taken at the CC of GUSP meeting on 6 May 1971, The documents of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party are now stored in Central State Archive, f.1B. This means that CPA, f. 1 now is CSA, f. 1B, inv.38, arch. Item 465

³² Reference for possible consequences for our country regarding not participating in the Olympic Torch Relay from 11 May 1971, The documents of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party are now stored in Central State Archive, f.1B. This means that CPA, f. 1 now is CSA, f. 1B, inv.38, arch. Item 465

sion that had nothing to do with sport and contradicted the Olympic principles.

- There might be an enhancement in the political contradictions, which would negatively influence the development of physical culture in the country.
- It was possible that Bulgaria would gradually be isolated from the ruling structures of the IOC, and there might be unwillingness for cooperation in future activities and initiatives.
- There might be a situation of “isolation” of our competitors during the Olympic Games and a refusal about Bulgaria’s

hosting of the forthcoming International Olympic Congress in Varna in 1973. This would lead to tension in the relations with the international sports structures and organizations regarding the development of certain sports.

Most probably, this reference was presented on the occasion of a meeting of the CC of BCP, but obviously, the probable consequences for our country were not taken into consideration. The decision about Bulgaria’s refusal was confirmed again on 11.05.1971 at a meeting of the secretarial board of the CC of BCP³³.

XIV. About the Olympic Torch Relay through Bulgaria – To send a final reply to the Olympic Committee that our country does not agree with the Olympic Torch Relay going through the territory of the National Republic of Bulgaria.

We can see in a reference from 12.06.1971 about our country’s participation in the Olympic Torch Relay for XX Summer Munich

Olympic games in 1972 that the CC of BCP brought the discussions back to their initial point from a year and a half before.

„Our efforts to be granted agreement for the Olympic Torch Relay through our country ended with the instructions given by the secretarial board of the CC of BCP to answer to the organizers of the Olympic Games that the torch relay will not go through our country.“³⁴

Despite the complicated political situation in this historical period, General Vladimir Stoichev succeeded in convincing the representatives of the CC of BCP and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to participate in the Olym-

pic Torch Relay. This decision was taken due to the future hosting of the Olympic Congress 1973 in Varna.

In his letter from 1.09.1971, General Stoichev wrote:

Dear Comrade Velchev,

In relation to the XX Olympic Games, the BOC, together with BUPCS and the whole society, has to organize the Olympic Torch Relay – a symbol of peace and friendship among nations – through our territory.

The final route of the relay passes through the territories of eight countries: Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Austria, and the German Federal Republic.

³³ Report „A“ № 282 of a meeting of the secretarial board of the CC of BCP on 11 May 1971, The documents of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party are now stored in Central State Archive, f.1B. This means that CPA, f. 1 now is CSA, f. 1B, inv.36, arch. item 1408

³⁴ Reference about our country’s participation in the Olympic Torch Relay for XX Munich Olympic games in 1972, 12 June 1971, The documents of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party are now stored in Central State Archive, f.1B. This means that CPA, f. 1 now is CSA, f. 1B, inv.38, arch. Item 465

The secretarial board of the BOC and the chairman of the CC of BUPCS think that this spectacular event should be organized and carried out in such a way that together with promoting the Olympic idea, the outstanding achievements of the socialist system and the socialist Bulgarian sport be promoted as well. In general – to show the advantages of socialism before capitalism.

On the basis of the Olympic idea for peace and friendship among nations and the significance of the modern Olympic Games, we can and must provide new, socialist content of the Olympic Torch Relay through our land; it should be used symbolically to highlight the advancements of our socialist regime compared to the somber political, economic, and cultural situation of Greece and Turkey³⁵.

After General Stoichev's letter was reviewed by the department "Foreign Politics and International Relations", S. Genov submitted a project for decision taking on 21 October 1971. The protracted negotiations between the BOC, BUPCS, BCP, and IOC did not yield results until 28 October 1971. The CC of BCP, with a decision № 857,³⁶ granted its approval for the Olympic Torch Relay through the National Republic of Bulgaria from 9th to 13th August 1972 *"along the following route: border point Kapitan Andreevo – Black Sea coast to the Bridge of Friendship in the town of Russe."*

CONCLUSION

The IOC's attitude toward the Olympic Torch Relay through Bulgaria managed to remain constant despite the great contradictions between the parties during the discussions. The correspondence with the IOC was carried out by the BOC from the very beginning. In reality, it could not perform any functions and did not have the possibility of taking decisions. The purposeful isolation of the BOC and General Vladimir Stoichev as a member of the IOC emphasized the political influence and inability of the communistic Bulgarian government to liberate itself from the impact of the USSR.

This research shows the existence of a powerful political mechanism of influence on the BOC from the highest state level, which was made by BUPCS, which, in fact, had the direct procurement from the BOC to determine and have relations with the representatives of the IOC and the other socialist countries on Olympic matters.

This research proves that the governing structures of the CC of BCP and BUPCS, on the one hand, wanted to be part of the Olympic Movement but, on the other hand, did not support the established Olympic principles. The interference of political interests in the symbolic Olympic Torch Relay, symbolizing the Olympic principles, could not promote the pure Olympic idea and the virtues of sport in Bulgarian society.

This type of political influence in the BOC's activities was predetermined by the country's particular political system and state government, which posed public organizations as an appendage to Bulgaria's ideological and political system. In this sense, the discussion concerning the Olympic Torch Relay through Bulgaria in 1972 is one of the most significant evidence of the political influence on the development of the sports movement in our country.

³⁵ Report from General Vladimir Stoichev to the CC of BCP about agreeing to the route of the Olympic Torch Relay through Bulgaria, 1.09.1971, CSA, f.№1, inv.36, arch. item 1752

³⁶ The documents of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party are now stored in Central State Archive, f.1B. This means that CPA, f. 1 now is CSA, f. 1B, inv.36, arch. Item 1752

Throughout that historical period, the media in Bulgaria, particularly the sports press, had a lot of restrictions and suffered political interference aimed at proclaiming communist ideology. Unlike the surveys done on the torch relay through our country in 1936, which found over 100 books, documents, and articles in periodicals, we found about 50 sources for 1972. The periodicals of that time, which promoted the party's daily contribution to the socialist government, rejected and did not objectively broadcast international events concerning political interests.

Some articles found in local and national periodicals are among the information sources covering the Olympic Torch Relay. These newspapers are "Haskovska Tribuna", "Dimitrovska Pravda", "Chernomorski Front", "Narodno Delo", "Shumenska Zaria", "Novo Ludogorie", "Dunavska Pravda", and "Naroden Sport".

The valuable documents we found show that the whole preparation was aimed at "agitation and propaganda" of the socialist model of government. The information in the documents confirms the high level of organization achieved by the local organizational committees based on preliminary plans, coordination of action between the different regions, regional structures, sports unions, high responsibility and discipline when performing the tasks.

The topic of this research has not been researched in detail because, in the past, political influence restricted the researchers to studying only the development of sport for all, the development of elite sport, and surveys presenting the achievement of communist power in the development of sports movement in Bulgaria. Since the Olympic Flame and the Olympic Movement were viewed as bourgeoisie phenomena, they were probably among the forbidden topics for scientific research.

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Corresponding author:

Emilia Vitanova, PhD

History and Management of Sports Department

National Sports Academy “Vassil Levski”

21, Acad. Stefan Mladenov str.

Studentski grad, 1700

Sofia, Bulgaria

E-mail: emilia.vitanova@nsa.bg