

# The Dancer Defects: The Struggle for Cultural Supremacy during the Cold War

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## A View of the 1948 London Olympics from across the Channel: An Analysis of the French Press

Michael Attali and Jean Saint-Martin

*During the Labour Party's preparation for the 1948 London Olympic Games, which were held from 29 July to 16 August and were, although only three years after the Yalta Agreement of 11 February 1945, an attempt to point the United Kingdom resolutely into the future, the French press did not hesitate to criticize the resourcefulness and relaxed attitude of the British. France's ambivalent perception was, moreover, further magnified by the absence of Germany, Japan and the USSR, which reopened the question of politics in sport and its use for propaganda purposes. 12 years after the nationalist excesses of the Berlin Games. Analysis of coverage concerning the 'Reconciliation Games' in the main French papers highlights the contrasted effect of the London Olympics and illustrates the predominant weight of political ideologies in the construction of national identities. Finally, it underlines the recurrent difficulties encountered in bringing together the French and the British who were, immediately after the Second World War, divided between the necessity to commemorate and be hopeful for a pacified Europe.*

Viewing developments in the context of post-war Franco-British relations, the French government and media kept a watchful eye over British preparations for the 1948 London Olympic Games, which were scheduled to be held between 29 July and 16 August. Organized soon after the end of the Second World War against a background of austerity and the emerging Cold War, the games were interpreted by the British government and media as pointing the nation resolutely into the future. [1] Restoring the Olympic movement after the cancellation of the 1940 and 1944 Olympiads, the 1948 Olympics re-opened the question of politics in sport, [2] most notably the use of the Olympic movement for propaganda purposes, 12 years after the nationalist excesses of the Berlin Games. [3] The absence of Germany, Japan and the USSR from the London Olympics accentuated the political factor. [4]

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