

Intern. Her. Tribune 8.3.87 p. 26

# Greece's New Goddess: The Woman Who Got the Games

International Herald Tribune

**L**AUSANNE, Switzerland — As Diana was being paraded through the tragic quiet of London, another kind of procession, a joyous re-encarnation of the finest Greek tradition, was being prepared in the opposite corner of Europe.

It was to honor Gianna Angelopoulos-Daskalaki, the 41-year-old woman who did what all the men in Greece failed to do seven years ago. She convinced the International Olympic Committee to award the 2004 Summer Olympics to Athens. At the same time, she persuaded her countrymen to cooperate with each other, to continue trying to modernize their institutions and, most important, to let her do all the talking. On Friday night, her name could be heard in song throughout the Greek capital — Gianna, Gianna — like a transcendent echo of prayers being whispered elsewhere.

"From what people have told me, the church bells have been ringing, there are people in the streets," said Angelopoulos. She was speaking of Athens. She explained, "Throughout the centuries we have thought of the Olympics as a way of life, as the way one lives. There is always enthusiasm for the Olympics.

Vantage Point/IAN THOMSEN

Everyone in Greece can feel it — they feel so proud, so proud and so happy."

Just as the British see themselves historically through their monarchy, the Greeks understand that they created the ancient Olympic Games and, centuries later, at Athens in 1896, revived them for the modern world. The Games were the Greeks' original idea, and yet in 1990 they weren't deemed worthy of hosting the Centennial Olympics, which were held instead in Atlanta last summer.

In April 1996, the Greek prime minister asked Angelopoulos, although she represented an opposition party, to oversee the latest Olympic bid for Athens. Angelopoulos is married to the Greek steel and shipping magnate, Theodore Angelopoulos. She is a lawyer, a former member of Parliament, and vice chairwoman of the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard. Within 17 months, learning how to deal with the IOC as she went along, she won a landslide 66-41 victory for Athens over Rome on the final ballot of the election Friday.

She was the first woman to head an Olympic bid, and — if she accepts —

will be the first woman to organize an Olympic Games. In a telephone interview Sunday, before her triumphant flight home to Athens, she refused to say whether she would oversee the new Athens Olympic organizing committee. By holding back, she will be able to use her enormous popularity to negotiate concessions from government and business leaders in Greece.

There seemed to be two phases to the Athens victory. After three rounds of secret ballots by the 107 IOC delegates, Athens had already won 52 votes, just two short of the necessary majority. Many of those voters were sympathetic to the idea of returning the Olympics to Greece, especially after Atlanta had resulted in such an organizational, overtly commercial disaster. Angelopoulos won them over by emphasizing the infrastructure improvements of her city, which is constructing a new airport, subway system and highways to alleviate traffic and pollution.

The second phase involved Primo Nebiolo, the controversial Italian who spoke on behalf of Rome during its presentation to the IOC Friday. Let no

one ever again suggest that the 74-year-old Nebiolo holds power within the Olympic movement. He may preside over international track and field, which is the most important Olympic federation, but in this election Nebiolo was plainly squashed by the 77-year-old IOC president, Juan Antonio Samaranch.

Athens won the final ballot in a landslide because of a meeting on the eve of the vote between Angelopoulos and President Nelson Mandela of South Africa, who promised that most of his supporters would jump to Athens as soon as Cape Town was knocked out of the election.

"There's talk about a deal being struck between Greece and the Africans," Nebiolo said afterward. "But how can they [Greece] guarantee South Africa gets the Olympics in 2008?"

A fellow Italian member of the bidding committee answered the question for Nebiolo. The Italians believe that Samaranch arranged the Mandela-Angelopoulos meeting. In return, apparently, Samaranch has promised to support Cape Town should it bid for the Summer Olympics next time.

"If they are running again, the bid for Cape Town can be very strong for 2008," Samaranch said at a news con-

ference Saturday.

If Samaranch did influence this election, then a larger plan seems to be taking shape. In the last decade, the IOC has secured itself financially by choosing the Olympic cities that would provide the safest, most efficient, functional — and, in the cases of Barcelona and Sydney — beautiful settings. Now, a different priority has taken hold. Samaranch has renewed the IOC with 22 new members in the last four years, including several former athletes. No longer is the IOC wedded to the most conservative choice, which in this election would have meant Stockholm or Rome.

Instead, the 2004 Olympics could afford to go to Athens, certainly in part because Samaranch wishes to link his administration with the roots of the Olympic movement. From there the Olympics can expand to the uncharted commercial markets of Africa, South America and — in large part depending on its management of Hong Kong — China.

The next Summer Olympics election will take place in four years, at the end of Samaranch's tenure. All bids will be accepted, but everyone in the Olympic movement seems to realize that Europe and the United States need not apply.