



1996 hosted the Summer Olympics in Atlanta, USA under a symbolic double patronage- pastor Martin Luther King (Gamrasni, 2024) who embodied the civil rights struggle and pharmacist John Pemberton who invented in 1886 the most famous, if not the most drunk soda (Coca-Cola).

Martin Luther King, an African-American Baptist pastor, is one of the best known and most fervent non-violent activists. He devoted his life to the civil rights struggle of African Americans. His memory was recalled at the opening ceremony, chaired by President Bill Clinton. The role of flag bearer of the French delegation is entrusted to the Caribbean athlete Marie-Jo Pérec, one of the most successful French sportswomen. A tribute to the diversity that the Olympic Games can, and must, defend. The memory of African American athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos, who wielded a fist gloved in black, at the Mexico City Games (1968) is still alive. The choice of former African-American boxer Mohamed Ali, to light the flame, reconciles the wounded memories of America.

The choice of Coca-Cola's headquarters is not innocent. The brand is one of the best known in the world. The American soda company is rewarded for its presence in Olympism, since Amsterdam in 1928. Since 1986, it has been a member of the TOP programme. The Olympic Games are a weapon of economic soft power. The numbers speak for themselves – 10,318 athletes gathered for two weeks, 197 teams entered in 271 events. The sports show attracted 83,000 spectators at the Stadium in Atlanta and 3.5 billion viewers worldwide. The Olympics is the most popular show - sport combines excellence, surpassing oneself and values of brotherhood.

The President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), Juan Antonio Samaranch, dubbed by General Franco in Spain, chose as a logo a torch, with the 5 Olympic rings and the number 100 to commemorate the centenary of the Games. The flames of the torch turn into a star, symbol of excellence - each athlete has to rely on his lucky star. The green represents the laurel branches, worn by the winners, and the City of Trees associated with Atlanta.

The Atlanta Olympics are of a cruel actuality- a bomb is posed by a factious American religious. The explosion on July 27, 1996, stained the Centennial Park with blood. The toll is heavy – 2 dead and 111 injured. The IOC condemns the incident. As in Munich in 1972 marked by the hostage taking of the Israeli delegation by Black September Palestinian terrorists who murder 11 Israeli athletes, the Games continue. Only a minute of silence is observed. At the closing ceremony, J. A. Samaranch declared that «No act of terrorism has ever destroyed or will ever destroy the Olympic Movement».

Yet the Olympics are no exception, like no other global event, to tormented geopolitics- in 2024 as in 1996 where geopolitics are even more explosive.

- (1) Documentary by Mickaël Gamrasni « Olympiques ! La France des Jeux », France, broadcasted on the 16th of July 2024 on France 2
- (2) The story of Coca-Cola-<https://www.coca-cola.com/fr/fr/about-us/histoire>
- (3) Website of the CIO- <https://olympics.com/fr/olympic-games/atlanta-1996/logo-design>

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