

Chapter 11

Democracy, Karate & WKF Politics

Unfortunately the administration of international sports has in recent years hit the headlines for the wrong reasons, namely mismanagement and corruption. Corruption is reference to the unethical manipulation of democratic rules by a few in pursuit of autocratic authority for partisan agendas, financial or otherwise. Often the logical consequences are executive actions expending assets owned by all for a few. The lack of transparency and manipulation of the democratic process facilitates such phenomena. Where there is “big money” there is “big corruption” and vice-versa. The WKF has not joined the “big leagues” of money yet, but vigilance now may save us from developing an incremental track record leading to much bigger ills later. Most of all preventive vigilance now may prevent us from falling into the abyss of a culture of corruption later, as have most of the “big league” IOC-member international sports federations. The public is to blame for often tolerating blatant desecrations of established democratic rules by leadership with a hidden agenda paraded as the “common good” (“end justifies means” argument) so long as no one is caught “with his hand in the cookie jar”. We must never forget what history tells us, which is that in almost all cases the tolerance of “harmless” political corruption of people in pursuit of more power lays the foundation for eventual financial corruption “as a way of doing business”. In other words corruption that does not involve money but mere “power-grabbing” eventually graduates to becoming corruption that does involve money and more “power-grabbing”. Although the world is more familiar with IOC corruption related to the selection of host-cities (the scandals that emerged out in the open at Salt Lake City Winter Olympics) and broadcasting rights, there are many other lesser known areas of IOC corrupt and unethical practices that have inflicted long term damage to this institution and her consumers, the world community of nations. We would like to review here some of these lesser known “infractions”. One cannot talk of the WKF without a review of her “parent body” the IOC. This is mainly because so much has occurred within the IOC that the WKF may unfortunately be modeling herself after; this essentially in pursuit of autocratic leadership. Even more pertinent is the fact that in this pursuit of power the WKF leadership has clearly based her 2006 revised Statutes on the Olympic Charter (especially articles over national sovereignty), but has chosen to omit the most important clause that came out of the Samaranch-era scandal reforms dealing with term-limits for the Presidency and the Executive Board. Even though the WKF leadership has adopted some aspects of the Olympic Charter through a careful “pick and choose” policy, one cannot talk of the WKF without a pertinent review of her “parent” body the IOC, which even after ten years of the reforms of 1999 and the post-Samaranch era of Jacques Rogge continues to be regarded as a highly “closed” organization (see the ‘Global Accountability Report/GAR released in December 2008 by one of the world’s leading global governance think tanks, the One World Trust).

The WKF’s painful experience with a corrupt IOC was clearly revealed over her 14-year ordeal to seek IOC recognition as the sole international federation representing sports karate. This ordeal dealt with in detail earlier exposed the corrupt inner-workings of the IOC leadership under Samaranch with regards to the IOC recognition process for new sports and their international federations. “Forcing” a WKF that represented more than 95% of the world’s national karate governing bodies to deal with the one-man show organization the ITKF on equal terms was nothing short of “criminal” ethical misconduct favoring a senior member of the IOC Executive Board Un Yong Kim who was also then President of the World Taekwondo Federation (WTF), Korean Olympic Committee and the Korean Sports Council. The proper ethical conduct would have been for Samaranch to ask for Kim to step aside temporarily or step down because of the clear appearance of a conflict of interest, involving the WTF. This never happened and as Andrew Jennings says, “karate got screwed” because the “devil” sat in-house to inflict maximum damage every time the karate case of recognition came up before the IOC Executive Board.

We believe that the greatest corruption ever within the IOC is that which involved the blatant relegation of athletes and women to a junior role with little or no political power, a policy and practice that sad to say is even more pronounced in the WKF. Athletes in whose name the

Olympic Games are held were pushed aside as political people jostled for power, prestige and the wealth that this brings with it. This is a "sinful design" of the past which President Rogge although a Samaranch "pick" and ex-Olympian is "desperately" trying to fix in his last term in office. The root of this "evil" can once again be traced to the IOC's disdain for national sovereignty and her efforts to impinge on this at every opportunity. Just as IOC members are considered IOC "possessions" and not representatives of NOCs/nations, the IOC is of the view that athletes at the Olympic Games are competing for themselves and a "world community" and not for their countries. It is a little known fact that it is for this reason that the IOC does not keep a medal-count by nations at any Games. It is rather strange for the IOC to encourage such egotistical individualism to combat national pride that athletes feel so strongly about, "instinctively". No international organization can replace this umbilical link between athlete and the nation. The shift in focus from athletes to officialdom coincided with the politics of big money and a bigger organization. While this process was gradual, it really culminated under the Samaranch Presidency (even though the Athletes Commission was established in 1981) when the IOC was awash with all kinds of problems, ranging from the scandalous raising of the age-limit for Presidential service to suit you know who, to "rigging" the host-city bidding process, to name a few. While President Rogge has in an unprecedented manner invited athletes to take their proper place on "center-stage", only fuller statutory-representation with voting rights in the IOC Executive Board will seat them in their proper place and make amends for past injustices. Given the long past of pushing athletes aside, "compensations" cannot be made fast enough. The general perception is that for too long IOC athletes have been used as mere fodder for the entertainment of the world's economic and political elites every 4 years, just like in Roman times. This is another reason why we must do everything possible to "cleanse" the Olympic organization of her elitist cum exclusive image.

On par with this "disenfranchisement" of athletes is the encroachment made on national sovereignty by the IOC Olympic Charter, in stipulating that IOC members are not national representatives but rather IOC "staff" in their homeland. Using the excuse that sports must be kept clean of politics, the infringements on national sovereignty only increased with time to a point where the IOC was in competition with national governments for the allegiance of citizens, as if it was also a government of some sort, beyond sports. The most recent expression of this political "pretension" was the banning of the Iraqi government-established NOC weeks before the 2008 Beijing Olympics, and then a quick conditional reinstatement that allowed Iraqi athletes to compete at the Games. More recently the IOC has taken action (as per Olympic Charter Rule 28.9) to suspend the NOC of Kuwait effective August 1st 2009 to protect the Olympic movement of the country from supposedly "interference by Kuwaiti public authorities". This "flexing of muscles" by the IOC was a clear challenge to national governments that fortunately for the Iraqi athletes was resolved on time. The fact of the matter is that every NOC must comply with national laws before they can even be formed (as an example, laws relating to the registration of societies), and therefore the ultimate in authority over NOCs cannot lie with the IOC irrespective of what the Olympic Charter says. Rule 28.9 is an insult to the sanctity of national sovereignty and must be dealt with by individual nations in concert with the United Nations. A private international sports organization such as is the IOC cannot hide behind vague ideals of "Olympism", to threaten the sovereignty of the nation state. National Olympic Committees like any other civic organization is bound by national laws (need we be reminded that NOC funds are for the most part from government budgets). Imagine pressuring national governments to enact NOC-friendly national laws pertaining to civic organizations? It is also a great injustice that the IOC sanctions/expels NOC's for "problems" originating from the national governments, including the withholding of funds (see IOC Press release of 6/16/09 on the impending expulsion of Kuwait). I guess the only way they can punish national governments is by punishing NOC's and their athletes, as was almost done to the Iraqi athletes headed for Beijing. It is hoped that such actions "on their own" will hurt national governments into concessions. There is a contradiction here. On the one hand NOC's are considered extensions of the IOC "family" in countries the world over, but on the other hand they are hurt to get to their national governments. The IOC Charter pits citizens against their own national governments and laws. This is a rather sensitive area that the IOC must tread with care, in the ultimate interests of athletes and not the ego of a

private international sports organization. This may be an important reason why there is concern in EU government circles of the need to “reign-in” private sports organizations with mass followings of their citizens like FIFA and the IOC, for greater oversight. The recent attempts by President Rogge to “cast the IOC’s net wider” in dealing with the UN on an equal basis to address the “national sports agenda” of countries is ridiculous; for while Ban Ki Moon represents the governments of the world, Rogge represents sports, a “hobby.” A national sports agenda is national business that the IOC may only address in an advisory capacity when invited to do so. All these efforts to project an image of the IOC as more than what it really is, may well be a thought out response to the perceived “threat” of the EU’s recommendation for greater public oversight, and therefore a “jumping of the gun” tactic. In this “new” role seeking international political status, the IOC may well be engaged in an effort to increase her legitimacy in the world community to help prevent the threat of oversight by public bodies, while dealing with the constant challenges posed by national sovereignty. All the IOC is and can be on the international political stage is as a non-state actor, like the many NGO’s that promote different agendas. While Samaranch appears to have perfected this art of posing with democratically elected world leaders as if they were his equals, there was always something odd and disproportionate about it. Given the world’s addiction to sports the IOC’s “flexing of muscles” is tolerated and maybe even humored by national leaders and organizations like the UN, but for the WKF to act like a mini-IOC and deal with national sovereignty “on par” is as some say “pushing it”.

I cannot agree more with Rogge in his recent assertion that if the IOC gets involved in politics, it will be torn apart and eventually cease to exist. Irrespective of politics, “the Games must go on” and athletes must meet as athletes and not political representatives. However there is nothing wrong with democratic expressions of causes that athletes may want to advocate. It is when you ban such free expressions that trouble brews. We think that the “IOC Inc” as a private organization will be inviting trouble in trying to be more than what it should be, that is the organizer of the World Sports Championship every 4 years. The use of sports to promote sensitive political agendas like human rights, especially in response to pressures from the “industry” (advocacy groups) or countries with vested interests will only invite self-destruction.

Contrary to well meaning slogans touting the separation of politics and sports, partisan political behavior is at the core of all international sporting organizations including the “mother” of them all, the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Sports will invariably intersect with politics, especially at the “micro” intra-organizational level, but also beyond. Politics is “everywhere” in the IOC, from access to coveted membership into the Executive Board to selection of host cities for the Olympic Games and the admission of new federations/sports. While the Olympic Charter may appear like a noble document to serve athletes, the organization itself is fraught with political corruption that has led to economic ones as well (as per Jens Weinreich the Sports Editor of the Berliner Zeitung and author of ‘Corruption in Sports’). The common factor in most if not all cases of corrupt practices is how loop-holes in democracy are manipulated to establish autocratic leadership “with a human face”. What is a lot more damaging to a country than the occasional actual act of corruption is the evolution of a corrupt culture and mentality over time generated by public apathy. Eventually it develops into a way of life and you reach a point of “no return”, as in so many developing countries. The Olympic Charter may have set this autocratic trend in motion in many of her member federations by clearly usurping the sovereignty of NOCs (Bye-Laws to Rules 28 and 29 of the section on NOCs) by establishing rules supposedly designed to protect NOCs from the uncertainties of national politics. In the process they have “privatized” the administration of sports while ignoring warnings that private initiatives always end up being for private gains. While it may appear laudable that in mid 2008 the IOC imposed a temporary suspension on the interim Iraqi Olympic Committee established by the Iraqi government, they have ignored many infractions against athletes and democracy by NOCs and their member federations. In a sense the Olympic Charter laid the groundwork for corruption in Olympic sports administration at the national and international levels by liberating NOCs and their member federations from government controls and turning them into closed “private clubs”. The people through their duly elected governments must take back power lost to powerful private interests now controlling the IOC. We have always felt that given longstanding abuses of power and

“backroom politics” culminating in financial corruption, (especially under Antonio Samaranch) the Olympic Games should come under the auspices of the United Nations, to ensure better oversight by the citizens of the world to whom the “torch” belongs. The IOC must be transformed into an official UN agency called the United Nations International Olympic Committee or something similar (UNIOC), with the permanent offices based as now in Lausanne. Nothing will change except a more direct supervision of international sports by world citizenry instead of members of a “private club”. Responsible governments in mature democracies of the European Union have recognized this problem as serious enough to warrant immediate attention and action. This explains the European Union’s White paper of November 2007 recommending among other things greater governmental intervention into the administration of sports. The scandals of the Samaranch era demanded action which resulted in the 1999 IOC decision to introduce term-limits for the Presidency. Not surprisingly NOCs and their member federations have not followed suit even though their statutes are supposed to reflect the IOC Charter. It must be said that Jacques Rogge and the anti-corruption tide of the times has brought important changes in a very short time such as the introduction of term-limits for the Presidency/Executive Board, the empowerment of athletes and gender equity. The fact that these new inclusions in the Olympic Charter have not “filtered down” to National Olympic Committees (NOC) and their member national federations is of concern to athletes who have to face them on a “daily” basis and not once every 4 years. It is indeed troubling that the IOC policy of term-limitations for the Presidency and Executive Board of 1999 has not been adopted by the charters of NOCs?

Sometimes politics is very manifest as in the case of the boycotts of the Los Angeles and Moscow Olympics and other times it is very subtly expressed (as the WKF’s inclusion of Israel in the EKF while neighbors Syria and Lebanon are in the AKF; this obviously to placate the Arab-Israeli problem even when Syria and Lebanon participate in the Mediterranean Games). Even distant Turkmenistan is an EKF member. More subtle is the fact that the Mexican Karate Federation is in both the Central American and Caribbean Karate Confederation as well as in the North American Karate Federation while the USA with a long Caribbean coastline is only admitted in the North American Karate Federation? Is this part of a subtle anti-American policy of “keeping the Yankee out”? For us in karate the most painful political experience of all was the blatantly partisan IOC process that admitted taekwondo as an Olympic sport before karate. On occasions non-state actors also make very brazen political appearances, such as the tragic Munich killings of 1972 and the now famous Black Power salute of the Mexico Olympics of 1968. Months before the 2008 Peking Olympics the issue of Tibet was exploited in a timely fashion by the international Tibetan lobby group, to gain international sympathy and possible Chinese concessions. An Indian soccer star refused to carry the Olympic torch in protest against China over Tibet while remaining silent on the issue of the Indian invasion of the independent Himalayan kingdom of Sikkim in 1973. Why China over Tibet and not India over Sikkim is yet another more recent example of the incursion of politics in international sports.

Internal political posturing comes from a relentless human desire to control assets and profit from them or just to “live the good life”. It is part of the eternal struggle of democracy against the powerful human instinct to control fellow humans for benefits. So powerful is this human control-instinct that only eternal vigilance can hope to hold it abeyance. Since many years the IOC was a sort of haven for shady political “has-beens” and economic elites in search of international respectability. Until the ascendancy of Jacques Rogge as IOC President, athletes had little or no political power within the organization. Even though rules were established to democratize participation, their eventual manipulation weakened the process. The successful manipulation of democratic norms to ensure the long tenure of individuals in civic organizations is very common practice. When carried to an extreme this has become the nemesis of institutions of civil society and a principal cause of alienation from democratic systems. Leaders of international sports federations appear to have a special flair for this craft that is exemplified in both the IOC (especially under Samaranch) and the WKF. Often times the game is taken to such petty extremes that important contributions of past officials and athletes are routinely expunged from current records, reminiscent of infamous past political purges of people and their history. This appears to have been the case when Espinos replaced Delcourt but there are also many other

more subtle examples of partisan political behavior especially at the national federation level as well (the Gilles Cherdieu case in France, and the effort to erase my legitimate history from the annals of Malaysian WKF involvement a full 6 years before MAKAF the current national federation was established). A recent blatant case of politics at the continental level took place at the 2007 AKF Seniors in Malaysia where the WKF-recognized AIKF group of India was not allowed to participate because of the successful intervention of the de-throned rival group, using good political connections to the EC of the AKF.

When statutes are designed to favor incumbent leadership (as is the case of the 2006 revised Statutes) with no clear stipulations for term limits for elective and even appointive posts, political and economic corruption will be the logical conclusion.

Politics takes many forms in the WKF, all of which should be of concern to us. Most glaring is the accumulation of power through manipulation of the organization and the Statutes that govern it. This administrative cum political corruption sets the stage for all other forms of arbitrary behavior to consolidate power in a few hands and eventually reap the benefits (this may start “innocently” as a corporate credit-card without limits issued to the “unsalaried” leader to be able to respond quicker to the “needs of the organization”). The unsavory “messenger-boys” or as some prefer to call them the “Presidential hit men” usually get the “left-overs” such as free travel and room/board for important events. The money for all of this comes from the “money-mill” composed of membership dues, a non-ending and lengthy certification process of referees, vendors of equipment, and of course exorbitant athletic fees for participation at the many WKF events that are run during the entire year (approximately 120 Swiss francs per individual event and 180 Swiss francs for team events). New events such as the Children’s World Championships and future ones like the Masters Championship will only fatten the WKF central coffer even more and finance the “good life” for an exclusive leadership. In addition countries wanting to host WKF tournaments not only have to pay advance surety guarantees of Swiss francs 40K, but also 20K towards purchase of air-tickets for WKF VIPs at the discretion of the WKF President. Host countries must also provide free room and board at plush host-hotels for the Presidential entourage. With all these benefits there is no need for a salary. No wonder the great Antonio Samaranch was kind enough to “sacrifice a salary” from the IOC for so many years and brag about it. So the good-life waits for whoever controls the organization through political and administrative manipulations for the use of assets that belong to the general membership embodied by the Congress in the WKF and the General Assembly in the IOC.

It is to the current politics of the deliberate accumulation of power and the impact of these developments on the future of the WKF as a viable democratic international Olympic karate organization that we shall now turn to, bearing in mind that political corruption and the concentration of power through “innocent” administrative changes of official statutes sets the stage for more blatant economic corruption and the denigration of democratic ideals later. The principal culprit of this monopoly of power within the Presidency/Executive Committee of the WKF is the practice of “platform/team” based elections. This practice must be severely outlawed as it has reduced the EC into becoming an arm of the President instead of serving as a check against the abuse of Presidential authority. Platform-politics in the WKF a la political parties has clearly subverted the “sacred” principle of checks and balances that even democracies need to survive. While members of the Presidential team are “guaranteed” victory, daring opponents are “black-listed” and denied all future opportunities in the WKF. For this reason members of the “platform” are increasingly running for elections unopposed, which is a rather unhealthy sign for democracy. This is a typical case where the democratic process of a wider choice of candidates is subverted. Few dare to oppose the “platform” as an independent candidate for fear of recriminations against them and possibly also their national federations.

What concerns many most of all is the clear trend towards centralization of authority and autocratic controls within the WKF intended to procure life-tenure for the incumbents. This process which can be traced back to Delcourt times has evolved into an art form under the Espinos administration. While Delcourt manipulated his authority to install his share of cronies

into the EC, Espinos has gone further in less time by altering statutes for the exercise of Presidential authority over whatever remains of the badly scarred sovereignty of national federations, in addition to filling the EC with his people. This was essentially his response to a humiliating defeat suffered at the hands of the Slovak Karate Union in 2003 when they took their case against the WKF to the Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS or in French Tribunal Arbitral du Sports/TAS; the highest court for sports arbitration recognized by the IOC and based in Lausanne, Switzerland) and won. The retaliation for this “defeat” is being done through what may appear to the casual eye as a “respectable” adoption of parts of the Olympic Charter. In reality this action serves to “legitimize” an autocratic purpose, such as the section which considers IOC members as IOC delegates to National Olympic Committees and not the other way around (Bye-Laws to Rules 28 and 29 of the Olympic Charter adopted in 2007). Manipulation of statutes coupled with the recruitment of “smart choices” (“yes men and women”) from little “banana republics and Pacific Ocean atolls” completes the grand design for the centralization of power in the WKF within the Executive Committee, the leader of which is the President. Under the Espinos administration the pace of this centralization of power in the EC over the sovereignty of national federations is clearly unprecedented. Statute-changes limiting the authority of national federations are unfortunately now routinely endorsed by a tamed Congress no longer able to serve as the ultimate sovereign authority. Through a system of inter-locking pro-Espinos alliances put in place at the regional and continental levels, the Congress has unfortunately become a mere “rubber-stamping” tool for Presidential decrees.

Every organ of the WKF is used to exert influence and control over national federations, including the non-elected Commissions. Especially effective in this design is subtle use of the Referees Commission so central to the lives of athletes and their national federations. National federations are forever trying to seek a disproportionate share of referees and judges in the hope that this will somehow protect their athletes. This “greed” leaves them open to influence and manipulation by a Chairman of the Referees Commission who reports to the EC, as he is appointed by them. Then comes the once again EC appointed Disciplinary and Legal Commission (DCL), which cannot be expected to be fair in cases brought against the WKF, as the Slovak Karate Union found out. Furthermore there are arbitrary actions taken by the President in support of “cronies” that clearly violate ethical standards if not Statutes, for which the whole organization has to be embarrassed by internationally publicized legal defeats.

Then there is the rather conspicuous appearance of tolerance shown by the WKF leadership for what is apparently a breach of internal rules relating to conflicts of interest between an important WKF official and his private karate business (Conflict of Interest Regulation-CIR of WKF Rules, Regulations and Commissions revised in 1/6/2005 and provided as appendix). The apparent tolerance showed by the WKF leadership for the clear conflict of interest situation between the Chairman of the Referees Commission and his world-wide private karate interests known as KOI (Kobe-Osaka International) is to say the least unethical and a breach of “their” own rules. The details of this and other developments will be dealt with in this chapter.

What is clear in the current politics of the Espinos leadership is the effort to consolidate all power in the executive and the small group of “merry men” who make up the EC. Between 1998 and 2006 such developments took a normal course as people were being won over with “goodies” and cronies brought into the inner circle of the EC, but the statutes of governance were essentially left alone. All this came to an abrupt end after the adoption of the 2006 Revised Statutes at WKF-18, which virtually eliminated the sovereign rights of national federations in the WKF and appeared to many as nothing less than “statutory rape”.

One cannot help but observe that so much of sports leadership at the national and international levels is in the hands of “non-athletes” (this “high-jacking” of international sports federations/IFs by a small group is a troubling undemocratic development that is monitored by reputable international watch-dog groups like ‘Play the Game’ and others-see www.Playthegame.org). Just look at FIFA and the IOC. We wonder if the preponderance of “political people” over athletes predisposes such management to autocratic inclinations and eventual corruption. As the terrible debacle of Karate England has clearly shown us all, non-athletes (including those from other

sports) have different priorities and therefore should be kept out of positions of leadership in sports organizations.

However let me begin on a quieter note with a very personal political experience albeit at the national federation level a long time ago, but which is nevertheless yet another indication of the extent to which personal egos reign supreme over what prevailing pessimism has humorously dubbed as the "bullshit-do" code instead of Bushido Code; and yet one that many traditional karate leaders rather hypocritically espouse in public while practicing the opposite in private. What happens at the national levels of sports administration is important because these are the "incubators" of people and ideas that eventually impacts the administration of sports at the higher international level.

The forgotten "father" of Malaysian WKF karate history

I am the founder of the first Malaysian WKF karate movement (FEMKO or Federation of Malaysia Karate-do Organizations) who voted at the historical WUKO Congress of 1972 in Paris for Jacques Delcourt to become the President of WUKO. I also represented FEMKO officially at the 1st Asian Karate championships held in Singapore in 1973 under the auspices of the Asian Karate Federation (AKF) which was then known as the Asian Union of Karate-do Organizations (AUKO). I am saddened by the blatant omission of these facts from the annals of the history of the Malaysian Karate Federation (MAKAF) as it appeared in the welcome brochure to WKF-12 in Malaysia, and as it appears in the current MAKAF website. In these and other MAKAF sources the national karate movement is erroneously recorded to have started when MAKAF was established in 1978, when in fact FEMKO preceded MAKAF's founding by 6 years. The participation of Malaysian karate as FEMKO at WUKO-2 (2 athletes that included the now deceased Sheikh Naser and I as the Team leader) can very easily be verified through WKF records and Malaysian newspaper articles of the time (see Malay Mail March/April 1972 Sports page). It is to say the least a travesty of history to deny a young nation such as Malaysia a much longer international sports history. I sincerely hope that MAKAF officials will someday soon right this wrong in all official documents or be responsible for a permanent blemish on an aspect of Malaysian sports history. WUKO-2 of 1972 in Paris was a historical occasion that changed the course of world karate by wresting it away from rigid Japanese controls and "internationalizing" it. A government sanctioned Malaysian karate delegation was present here in an official capacity. This is an irrefutable fact. I hope that there will be a correct recording of this aspect of Malaysian sports history in the soon to be published Encyclopedia Malaysia on Malaysian sports by the French publishers Millet, based in Singapore (I was interviewed for this in 2006 by a member of their staff Fong Min Yuan of fongminyuan@ednbooks.com.my). On my part I have even tried writing to an old NYC golfing acquaintance Abdullah Badawi who was until March 2009 the Prime Minister of Malaysia, to right this wrong, but to date have failed to receive a response. Such silence can only give credence to Henry Ford's infamous belief that all "history is bunk".

The 26-year reign of the WKF by Jacques Delcourt ended in 1998 at the WKF General Congress of Rio. With hopes for better progress in our quest for Olympic recognition members voted for a change and brought in Antonio Espinos of Spain as the new WKF President (tenure of service was also extended from 4 to 6 years). A new General Secretary George Yerolimpos of Greece was selected as part of the Espinos-platform of "pre-approved" candidates for the EC. After "cleaning-house" of all remaining Delcourt-men, the Espinos-platform of candidates were voted into all vacant EC seats. The process was completed as elections were also due then for EC membership. So the Rio Congress gave members a fresh start with hopes for a better future after 26 long years of rule by Delcourt. The lone "survivor" of this political purge of the past was Mr. Tommy Morris, the longtime EC-appointed head of the Referees Council of 3, which is now known as the Referees Commission of 15. This is the only powerful position within the WKF that has remained non-elective even though the position carries the potential for the exertion of great political influence over national federations ever keen to have more of their referees certified. While as of 2004 membership into the Referees Commission of the EKF is based on election by peers based on a complex formula (except the all-powerful Chairman), the highest refereeing

authority, the WKF Referees Commission continues to be a body appointed by the EC. Even when elections are someday introduced here, we are sure that the all-powerful Chairman will continue to be appointed by the EC, thus negating the whole principle of elections and democracy finally brought into this important body. There is also a minimum and maximum age requirement for service, that while strictly adhered to at the bottom (RC requirement that kata/kumite candidates must be at least 30 years old, which most people find ridiculous) appears to have been modified in a timely fashion for people at the top (see Article 10.8 of the 2006 Statutes that mandates RC members to retire at age 65 and the Transitional Dispositions of the same Statute at the end that extends this); very reminiscent of the “great” Samaranch and his manipulation of age requirements in the IOC to suit himself.

Over the 36-year life-span of the WKF, we have witnessed radical advances in the kumite techniques of the athletes of this world karate stage which is the legitimate representative of “Olympic” karate. Such changes have however not kept pace with much needed internal democratic organizational transformations that would make the WKF more responsive to the needs of athletes and member federations, the two core units of the WKF. While it is our firm opinion that Europe as the source of the best in karate techniques and organizational expertise should continue to play a vanguard role, this must be based on clearly transparent policies that includes the recruitment of genuine non-European talent within the WKF and built-in manipulation-proof vigilance against autocracy. Unfortunately what we have observed of the WKF leadership over the years is the tendency to seek out sycophants rather than genuine talent from Europe and the other parts of the world. Proven karate programs of nations such as Turkey (until 2006 when yet another non-karate person Aydogan Celik was brought into the EC of both the EKF and WKF) Iran, Croatia, Serbia, Russia, Slovakia and Bosnia-Herzegovina to name a few, are conspicuously under-represented in the WKF halls of power, while many of those chosen from the power-program nations are not their best talent. Part of the problem is that there appears to be no shortage of karate leaders from some of these regions who are ever willing to sell their votes in exchange for “quiet positions of collusion” that brings stature in their own “barrios”, as well as “little goodies” such as free travel and lodging every so often. It is to reward sycophant loyalty that federations wishing to host WKF tournaments are required to provide a large number of free rooms (and always in the exclusive and expensive host hotel). Increasingly changes have been made to existing Statutes to make it easier to bring in non-karate practicing people into the top EC posts by not requiring any karate credentials of these people (2006 Revised Statutes no longer requires the President and Secretary to have karate qualifications). Before this and other irregular practices take deep roots, it is the urgent responsibility of the Congress representing all members to ensure that traditional democratic processes are not sabotaged beyond repair by an incumbent administration (principally by the President, the EC and an extremely influential unelected Chairman of the Referees Commission). A terrible blow has already been delivered to the democratic process in the adoption of the 2006 Revised Statutes at WKF-18 in Finland, which will be discussed at length later in this chapter.

Whatever happened to the tradition of athlete political activism set by John Carlos & Tommy Smith at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics; that now famous Black Power salute?

The political activism of prominent athletes appears to be a thing of the past. With a lot more sponsorship money at stake, athletes have become subservient to their own fears of losing this money over controversial political views made, and so have increasingly become passive. At least in the past there were some big names who had clear political opinions such as the Cuban boxer Teofilio Stevenson, Paul Robeson, Muhammad Ali (who symbolically threw his gold medal into the river at the Rome Olympics) and American sprinters John Carlos and Tommy Smith of the 1968 Mexico City Olympics “Black Power salute” fame. Today the big name athletes have through their silence become embarrassingly submissive to the conservative ideologies of their financial sponsors. They strive to be politically correct so as not to jeopardize the flow of money from conservative corporate sponsors, and as a consequence have come to hold the least educated of opinions when forced to give one. Big pay-checks buy the silence of elite athletes even when it makes them look like ridiculous “dumb jocks”. Karate champions appear to be

following the same path of “political correctness” even when they are not contenders for big money from sponsors and can never dream of becoming “coca-cola faces”. Nevertheless they have clearly become submissive to smaller rewards of in-house fame manipulated by the ruling clique within the WKF. It appears that these athletes only want a “center stage to dance on” and their year or two of fame as a WKF champion. For this privilege they will sacrifice the running of this stage to whoever manipulates it, very much like the gladiators of Roman times. It is a very selfish stance. Most do not even have the decency to come to the defense of fellow athletes and coaches victimized by unfair politics. In the WKF this apolitical mentality of athletes is the reason for their complete lack of power in the organization. With a mere invitational seat and no voting power in the EC they have no role in the way the organization is run and so do not react even when injustices are committed to their own kind. Such is the state of the political impotence of athletes in the WKF under current Statutes.

It is remarkable that the vast majority of athletes in most sports are either politically naïve or politically “dead”, even though national and international politics eventually consumes them, such as the infamous boycotts of the 1980 Moscow and 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games. One cannot help but conclude that while athletes are well developed physically, this appears to have been at the expense of the growth of social and political consciousness. The truth of the matter is that modern athletes have essentially “prostituted” themselves for money and fame, big and small. Nevertheless it is rather sad that elite athletes have not been at the forefront of social and political movements for a long time, but especially since big money became involved in international sports. The words of a French karateka Jacqueline Le Sains fighting autocratic injustices within the French national federation (FFKDA) under the Didier leadership puts it very well; “Le karate s’éveillera lorsque ses techniciens se revolteront et defenderont enfin leurs droit” (Karate will only develop when karatekas will revolt and finally defend their rights-for details, consult www.cd kf2005.free.fr).

This conspicuous lack of political consciousness and activism among elite karate athletes has reduced them to being nothing more than helpless gladiators pitted against each other like in Roman times. All the emphasis on mental and spiritual development in karate appears to have done little to provoke political consciousness leading to activism, if only to protect their own welfare as athletes within the WKF. The dichotomy between physical development and the growth of weak socio-political consciousness is so very clear for all to see. It is rather sad that these “tough guys” are so politically subdued, and ultimately victims of the whims of whichever group controls the inner workings of the WKF. More than ever in the history of sports is the term a “dumb athlete”, a fitting stereotype for the modern apolitical karateka.

Whatever happened to the sense of “brotherhood” that karatekas are supposed to have ingrained within them through ancient codes of conduct and more? Why have they stood by while fellow athletes were treated unfairly? Has the quest for being number one led them astray from core values of unity, as the underdogs of the WKF system? At WKF-17 in Monterrey (Mexico) I personally witnessed one example of the lack of brotherly bond among the French athletes. Each federation was asked to submit names for the selection of the greatest WKF fighters of the “century”, so to speak. Conspicuously left out of the French list was the name of their “gentleman fighter” Gilles Cherdieu, without question acknowledged as one of two all time greats from France; the other being Alexandre Biamonti. All of French karate suspected that this was the work of the hidden hand of the autocratic leadership that disliked Cherdieu for speaking up when he was a member of the French coaching staff. Not a single French karateka publicly challenged this omission of Cherdieu, the most “decorated” French WKF fighter from that list. This does not say much for athletic solidarity among French karatekas. This blatant omission is nothing more than a shameless effort to deny a deserving athlete his place in history, and in the process also a blatant effort to “rewrite” the history of French karate to suit the politics of the current leadership.

Athletes must always be the first priority and deserving of Center Stage

It is athletes who bring us all together in the WKF and all other sports federations (and so the crucial importance also of the Referees Commission within this organization). This appears only now to be recognized by the IOC under President Rogge, and it is for this reason that the IOC holds an International Athletes' Forum every two years. At the 3rd Forum held in Dubai in October 2007, and the 4th held in Morocco in May 2009, "the participants all agreed on the possibility of making it compulsory for athletes to be on the Executive Boards of International Federations and National Olympic Committees" (see IOC Newsletter# 193 for 29/10/07 to 2/11/07 at www.olympic.org/newsletter). In Dubai 2007, 35 of the IOC-recognized International Olympic Sports Federations were asked to send representatives, including the WKF. The newly set up Virtual Olympic Congress to consult the public on all matters concerning the Olympic movement has as the first of 5 themes, athletes (IOC Press Release of 1/15/08). The principle idea here is for athletes to be directly and fully involved in all aspects of the Olympic movement including the organization of the Games. All too often ambitious bureaucrats with little or no record to speak of as athletes "take over" and push athletes into oblivion. The theme of athletes and their interests was also on "center-stage" at the Beijing Olympics, thanks to President Rogge; as it was also at the 121st IOC Session of Copenhagen held in October 2009. At this same Congress there was also an important theme on 'Good governance and ethics'.

The lack of peer-elected athletic representation in the WKF is very glaring even with the vague intent of proper athlete-representation recorded in the 2006 Statutes as Transitional Disposition #8 (see full text of 2006 WKF Statutes provided as appendix). We should be following in the footsteps of our parent-body the IOC, which in 1981 established the Athletes Commission (see Rule 21 of the Olympic Charter), even though under Samaranch it was a powerless body composed of political appointments. As a consequence of all the corruption scandals under Samaranch and especially after the election of Jacques Rogge, the Samaranch-pick for succession (a former triple-Olympian in yachting; member of the Belgian national rugby team; Vice-Chairman of the Medical Commission/WADA; past President of the European Olympic Committee, the Belgian NOC and member of the IOC Executive Board since 1998), this Commission has come alive and been accorded proper full status. It is now composed of 19 IOC members appointed for 8-year terms, 12 of whom are peer-elected from summer and winter Olympic athletes who competed in the last Olympics (Athens 2004) and will be competing in the next one (Beijing 2008). The remaining 7 are appointed by the President to adjust for gender and geographical equity. All candidates seeking to be elected for any position in the IOC must first be approved by the Nominations Committee (which does background checks for ethics and other violations and in which the Athletes Commission is fully represented). The "revival" of the Athletes Commission by President Rogge and the election of her members by peers (12 of 19 and the rest by Presidential prerogative to supposedly correct gender and geographical imbalance) is a sign of the new respect shown by the IOC for those who are elected to serve athletes. Jacques Rogge himself an ex-Olympic athlete must be credited with taking the role played by athletes in the IOC structure to another level (suggesting a clear reason why only people with a significant athletic history must be permitted to lead sporting organizations).

An athletes place is "every place" in the organization - enter the 120th IOC session of Beijing 2008

Just look around and you will notice that athletes play a relatively small role in all sports organizations, especially at the international level, even though IOC President Rogge must be applauded for his efforts to push the interests and power of athletes and women to the forefront of the IOC since he took over. While 19 of the 118 IOC members are from the Athletes Commission, only 12 are peer-elected, with the remaining 7 being Presidential prerogatives. Most importantly the Athletes Commission does not enjoy full statutory-membership in the Executive Board (EB) of the IOC as it should, and can therefore only give advice and make recommendations to this IOC-core body. So athletes continue to be kept out of the "inner core" of power in the IOC. Amidst all the irrelevant "political noise" of the environment and human rights, the 120th Session of the Beijing Olympics will be remembered not only for the usual great athletic entertainment but also as a "turning point" in the long struggle for the empowerment of athletes. A great beginning was

finally made at the 120th IOC Session of the Beijing Olympics when on August 7th the new chairman of the Athletes Commission Frank Fredericks of Namibia was elected by a clear majority into the core decision-making body of the IOC, the Executive Board (92 for 8 against). While this signals a great beginning, we are disappointed that such membership is not an automatic statutory right of the Athletes Commission. The Chairman of the Athletes Commission and maybe even more members must be given a certain number of statutorily established seats in the IOC EB and not depend on the good graces of the IOC Assembly to “vote one or more in”. This has to change and can only come from the Athletes Commission taking a more aggressive stance on this specific issue of power-sharing which we hope the Frank Fredericks leadership of the Athletes Commission will do what Sergei Bubka did not during his tenure. We also hope that former female 400 metres hurdling great Nawal El Moutawakel’s election into the EB at the same 120th Beijing IOC Session will also help the cause of the Athletes Commission (the 1984 L.A. Olympics champion is the current Moroccan Minister of Youth and Sports). The “Michel Platini” (FIFA) of the world of international sports organizations are a rare breed. Instead bureaucrats, businessmen and ex-politicians with little or no sporting excellence of the past to brag of fill most positions. They include businessmen like Vasquez Rana of Mexico and Richard Carrion of Puerto Rico who need and “benefit” from this high profile public relations activity. Occasionally ex-politicians with dubious backgrounds are also able to “find refuge” in the international sports movement. Then there are the “rich-fat” Sheikhs with petro-dollars to spare and forever in pursuit of international titles, like Qatar’s Prince Tamin, Kuwait’s Sheikh Ahmad al-Fahad al-Sabah, Saudi Arabia’s Prince Faisal Fahd Abdul Aziz and Malaysia’s Tunku Imran. Then there is Princess Haya bint Al-Hussein a member of the Athletes Commission by virtue of being the “greatest female equestrian athlete” of the Middle East. In this mix is often found some eager-to-be-seen members of European royalty such as Prince Albert of Monaco (who served up to the 2008 IOC Session in Peking as vice-chair to Sergei Bubka in the Athletes Commission), Princess Anne of UK, Prince Henri of Luxembourg, Crown Prince Willem-Alexander of Holland, Princess Nora of tiny Liechtenstein and Infanta Pilar de Borbon the sister of Spain’s king Juan Carlos. Whoever thought of putting together such a mix must be credited, as this motley crowd of royalty, businessmen and politicians appears to be a great social mix of interlocking interests of Olympian proportions. This is the crowd that operates within the shadows as a “private club”, and as per Andrew Jennings, “they have got the copyrights to the most valuable sports franchise in the world”. Why would they give this up to increase the power of athletes and anything that invites greater citizen scrutiny? The “club”, sensing the increasing public outcry against “shady” private management within the IOC and member federations like FIFA (especially under Samaranch-era administration) has already started to engage in a fear campaign against more government supervision of international sports organizations. Meanwhile European citizenry continues to demand that these organizations be more accountable to the public, and the European Union’s 2007 White Paper recommending greater public oversight through their governments is the logical conclusion of grassroots discontent. The original Greek Olympic Games held between 776 BC and 393 AD were public state-run not private events. Warring Greek City “States” got together in peaceful athletic competition. It was French nobleman Baron Pierre de Coubertin who “privatized” the organization and management of the Olympic Games when it was revived in 1896. Since sports, is a great addiction of the masses, getting in on this “action” was probably the best decision this group could have made for themselves. In any case, state or privately-run, athletes past and present do not appear to have fared well in the competition for these jobs. Instead, the “IOC has served as a long procession of shady and self-serving people” (see John Hoberman’s book; *The Olympic Crisis-Sports, Politics and the Moral Order*).

To keep the negatives of politics at bay in the interest of the welfare of athletes, there must be a deliberate appointment of athletes in the organizational structure of the WKF. There must be formal peer-elected athletic representation with full rights in all the branches of the WKF but specially the EC, the Technical Committee, Referees Commission and the DLC (Disciplinary Commission). The relatively recent creation of a powerless and EC appointed Athletes Commission of 6 members (one from each continental federation) under the 1990 Australian world kumite champion (+80kg) Peakall is grossly inadequate and a cosmetic arrangement at best. It is insulting that the Chairman is merely invited to attend EC meetings but not to participate

as a full-member with voting rights like everyone else (especially an EC composed of some members with clearly questionable karate credentials and others with none). After all, who knows more about all things karate than elite athletes and their coaches? We think that athletes must have full representation where ultimate authority rests, which is within the EC. It is proper that athletic representatives have clearly mandated powers of recommendation and appointments over all branches of the WKF organization. Only with such comprehensive full structural representation will athletes take their proper place within this organization and prevent the current practice of serving the interest of officials more than the athletes it purports to represent. The IOC in planning for the 2014 1st ever Junior Summer Olympics Games, is even “threatening” to select sports “of particular interest to the younger generation”. They have come to the realization that alienated athletes and a general disinterest in sports among the youth could affect continued interest in the Olympic Games.

It is sad that the only step taken by the WKF in this direction since 1970 is a mere disclosure of intent in the 2006 Revised Statutes which appears as Transitional Dispositions #8 (“It is the intent of the WKF to, at such time as there is in place a mechanism through which this position can be directly elected by the athletes, to revise the Statutes to include the Chairman of the Athletes Commission as a full rights Executive Committee member”-see appendix).

Rules are being changed “left and right” that affect the performance of athletes but without their input or that of coaches. For this lack of proper consultation of athletes, some rule changes have negatively affected athletic performance, such as the recent prohibition of grabbing and fighting when in close quarters. When fighters get close to each other it is instinctive to grab while continuing to fight. To prohibit this natural and safe flow of free-fighting not only inhibits performance but also robs karate of a better showing of itself as a multi-faceted fighting art.

Any proper integration of genuine athletic representation into the WKF must firstly be through the Congress of the General Assembly of member federations. Each national delegation must include an athletic representative (a current or recent-past member of the national team as in the IOC) who will vote in the selection of an Athletes Commission with 50% seats in the Executive Committee of the WKF. Only the provision of such representation will show genuine concern for athletes within the WKF. The current practice of a powerless EC-appointed Athletes Commission representing the 5 continental regions is mere cosmetic democracy. In reality, even after 38 years of existence, athletes continue to be marginalized and denied a more substantive role within the WKF halls of power. We have to get past the current practice of token appointments of the silent willing and instead allow athletes to elect their own from among their current and past peers, with full statutory stipulated 50% or more representation in all the organs of the WKF. As a start, we suggest that the WKF closely follow the current IOC formula as the proper guide for constituting and empowering her own Athletes Commission without any further delay. As per IOC practice “only National Olympic Committees (NOCs) with an Athletes’ Commission can put forward a candidate” (see IOC Newsletter # 199 for 10/12/07 to 14/12/07 at www.olympic.org). It is very encouraging that the Rogge Presidency of the IOC has started to treat athletes as a principal priority and afforded them more political status and power. We hope that this practice will increase radically in time and most importantly also be required of all member federations such as the WKF.

We note that this Jacques Rogge-era of the progressive trend of empowering athletes in the IOC has already produced results, most recently over the efforts of the international “boycott” industry to get governments and NOCs to boycott the 2008 Peking Olympics over China’s policies in their province of Tibet. Athletic representation within the IOC has come out openly against any idea of a boycott. This is a radical change from the past when athletes were completely “voiceless and powerless” to stop the boycott of 2 Olympic Games, (Moscow and Los Angeles) that dashed the hopes of so many athletes, most forever. We are of the opinion that athletes must be fully-empowered “here and now”. No one understands why if the Olympic Games are all about athletes and youth, “old men are forever running the show”. We would like to see a greater proportion of “young” people (including teenage athletic sensations) managing the IOC. As the

IOC already has age requirements for service, this change will not be a “radical” one or difficult to implement. We hope that the momentum for progress in the empowerment of athletes provided by the Jacques Rogge leadership is not dashed by those who come after him. We also hope that it is not the “delirium of Olympic fever” that has brought the empowerment of athletes and their welfare suddenly into focus, but that this concern will be kept alive and well after the IOC “closes shop” to go home from Beijing.

The Ara Abrahamian case at the Beijing Olympics - the Swedish athlete who rejected his medal and paid dearly for it

This case is more important than you think. It is not only about an athlete who in “their” opinion violated a rule in the Olympic Charter prohibiting demonstrations of any kind, especially those with political undertones (which this was not), but also about the inability of the IOC “elders” to show compassion for an athlete troubled by poor umpiring that led to his loss of a superior medal. Even the regular courts recognize crimes of passion generated by temporary insanity. This veteran athlete on his “last leg” to get that gold, lost it for an instant, not by throwing the medal in a river (like Mohammad Ali), but by “politely” and symbolically placing it in the middle of the wrestling mat where he felt he had been aggrieved. Those of us who have been competitive athletes know full well the feeling of “being cheated” by the referee in a couple of minutes after years of grueling training and competitions. To “let it out” without violence is the proper road to recovery, and as “elders” we should have shown more compassion and just ignored a situation which would have all been over after a good night’s sleep. Instead he was dramatically expelled from the Games Village and his third place win erased from IOC records. Mohammad Ali who threw his gold medal into the river at the Rome Olympics did not suffer this fate and in fact his lost medal was even replaced a few years ago by the IOC. The court of 3 that included Sergei Bubka (who was Chairman of the Athletes commission up until the 120th IOC Session of Beijing 2008) stood on the grounds of “principles” and kicked Ara out. Violation of universal principles of sports were cited in Ara’s expulsion by an IOC that is rife with corruption of one sort or another even as it tries hard to give itself a new image. Doping is one thing but for a corruption “tainted” IOC to punish an “ageing” athlete so severely over a common non-violent temper tantrum after a lost match, is gross exaggeration and an “over-kill”. Frankly we expected better from Bubka, the chairman of the Ukraine Olympic Committee and a longtime Chairman of the Athletes Commission (albeit a “token” of the IOC elders who was conspicuously silent during his entire term) who was voted into the IOC as a regular member in Beijing. Is this the same Bubka who is Chairman of a Ukraine Olympic Committee that is rife with doping scandals? Should he not be spending more time tending to his own problems at home with doped up athletes rather than be part of a “lynching” of an athlete? What an irony that while he helps the IOC to deprive Ara Abrahamian of everything, his own athletes Liudmila Blonska (2nd in women’s heptathlon) and Igor Razoronov (6th in weight-lifting) receive the same punishment in Beijing for doping violations. Dominique Valera was similarly expelled from WUKO at the 1975 3rd world championship, but in this case for the use of violence against umpires who he thought cheated him out of a medal. Few would disagree with this decision, but in the case of Ara Abrahamian there was no violence involved and so the IOC should have acted with the wisdom of an elder and shown compassion rather than the cold face of executive authority. Why was this incident not delegated to the recently “empowered” Athletes Commission? The final decision would surely have had more validity if fellow athletes were the judges not sports bureaucrats. As for the WKF there are valuable lessons to be learnt from this, but given the lack of visionary leadership and actions to date, we doubt if this will be of benefit. To top it all, the case was quickly submitted to CAS (the IOC-recognized and respected Court of Arbitration for Sports based just like the IOC, in Lausanne) and a decision was rendered in favor of Ara Abrahamian even before the official closing of the Games (CAS concluded that an obvious error by the referee contributed to Ara’s loss, and lamented the decision by FILA the international wrestling federation to disallow an appeal). It is sad that the IOC took such swift and drastic action against Ara when they could have waited for the CAS decision. Since the IOC is bound by the decisions of CAS, they will probably have to “eat humble pie” now by reversing their decision and reinstating Ara. Once again we must be thankful to CAS, the same organization which in 2003 came to the aid of the

unjustly aggrieved national karate federation of Slovakia (the SKU or Slovak Karate Union) by the WKF (this case will be treated in greater detail later in this chapter).

The truth is that Athletes must empower themselves by unionizing to form an Athletes Union and ensure full representation in the Executive Committee. Only such independent political empowerment will produce desired gains from those in power.

Powerless coaches - A valuable resource cast-aside

Another very important group closely connected to athletes but “left out” of the equation are, the coach’s of the different teams, especially the elite ones. This group which has such a wealth of knowledge accumulated as past elite athletes as well, are completely shut out from the organization. Even powers of “live” protest over blatantly unjust match-decisions were taken away from them many years ago. Given that available instant-replay camera technology has still not been introduced in matches to compensate for human errors and judgment calls, some form of live-protest should be allowed. All coaches can do now is to wait until the match is over and then submit a formal written complaint to an appeals process, with a non-refundable protest-fee of Swiss francs 400 enclosed. Few dare to tread this road. We would like to recommend that peer-elected elite coaches (at the Congress) constitute a formal Coaches Commission with full-representation in the EC, Referees and Technical Commissions, with formal powers of recommendations over the last two. In fact every effort must be made to elect former elite athletes and coaches to the Technical Commission. All this can only happen when coaches are politically empowered through the formation of their own Union. The importance of a formal union composed of coaches, trainers and athletes was even adopted as recommendation #13 by the 121st IOC session of October 2009 in Copenhagen.

The principal problems of the WKF are clearly identifiable and visible for all members to see. While some are clear violations of established Statutes (the most current being the 2006 Revised Statutes) and the General Principles of law to suit partisan political agendas, others are clearly visible unethical practices (such as conflicts of interests, the discriminatory application of rule-sanctions and the shameful omission of karate credentials required from candidates for elections to the EC) that are un-becoming of an IOC member federation. The “best kept secret” is without doubt, the great conflict of interest situation created by the “KOI” factor and ignored by the principal actor. This is followed by problems emerging from a “back-room” drafted Constitution (and approved by the 2006 WKF Congress) clearly crafted to help in the arbitrary interpretation and imposition of statutes on problem federations and their members (the new 2006 Statutes allow the “long arm of the law” to reach even individual members because Articles 21.3 and 21.8 hold national federations responsible to the WKF for the actions of club and individual members). The 2006 Revised Statutes give the WKF-EC unprecedented autocratic authority. While the IOC members elected by an NOC composed Session are considered IOC “employees” and not NOC representatives to the IOC, the WKF has taken this a bold step further by statutorily imposing them on national Federations as full voting members of their Executive Committees (article 13.18 and 13.19 of the 2006 WKF Revised Statutes). A need for total control appears to have erased any past sense of accountability towards a now greatly weakened Congress and unleashed arbitrary and unethical practices on a scale never seen before. To all of this and more we will now turn our attention in greater detail.

National sovereignty is the corner-tone of International Organizations

Respect for national sovereignty is the foundation-stone of all international relations and therefore international organizations, such as the most important of them all the United Nations. This simple but important “first” principle of international relations is clearly central to the United Nations Charter. No respectable international sporting federation can afford serious transgressions over national sovereignty and remain effective in the long run. The precedent for transgressions over national sovereignty was unfortunately set by the Olympic Charter which clearly stipulates that IOC members are representatives of the IOC in their respective countries,

not delegates of these countries to the IOC. Pierre de Coubertin clearly wanted to create a private organization responsible for controlling world sports. Towards this end began the great IOC campaign to separate citizen from country, even though without the financial support of the nation state both his dreams and those of athletes may never have been realized. An integral part of this ideology is that the IOC considers Olympic athletes as competing for themselves and not their countries and for this reason does not keep a medal count by country at the Olympic Games because this is perceived to be an expression of the recognition of national sovereignty, even though the national flag is raised and the national anthem played at all medal award ceremonies. The IOC "elders" (some prefer to use the term "mafia") go to great lengths to protect their private franchise rights by a denial of national sovereignty at every chance they get, some more overt than others. This may be why Jacques Rogge closed the Beijing Olympics by saying, "I invite the youth of the world to meet in London in 2012" instead of "I invite the nations of the world". This sentiment is expressed again by Rogge in his press release of 8/24/2008 titled 'IOC President Jacques Rogge Predicts Positive Legacy from Games' in which he says, "a record 204 NOCs (not countries) sent athletes to the XXIX Olympiad.....and a record 87 NOCs (not countries) joined the medal count". Nothing can be clearer. It appears that the IOC is ever ready to pit citizen against country at every chance they get so as to drive home their point that athletes are competing for themselves and not their countries. If governments are not involved in funding athletes and the hosting of the Olympic Games, few of the Games would have been held. The \$40 billion plus spent by the Chinese government to stage the 2008 Beijing Olympics could never have been raised by private initiatives. So given this fact the IOC needs to show more not less respect for national sovereignty, and above all get away from this denial mode they have been in for so many years. It is a sense of national pride that drives athletes to excel, not belonging to an international "family" represented by the IOC. Athletes must never be denied this intense inner emotional need by an IOC that is essentially seen as a hodgepodge of retired politicians (some with shady backgrounds), businessmen, Euro-Asian royalty and a "few" ex-athletes. I guess the sovereignty of NOCs is in a sense "protected" by placing ultimate authority for them in the hands of the Session of the IOC. The truth is this creates a division between citizens of the same country, that is between the IOC "protected" NOC members and their national governments. However the fact that candidates can be nominated for IOC membership by other than NOCs weakens any semblance of national sovereignty that remains. The lack of national identity and authority in the IOC assembly has been a thorny issue for many an important NOC such as the United States Olympic Committee (USOC). In 1999 then USOC President Bill Hybl was the principal spokesman for this discontent of the lack of national authority in the IOC. Hybl felt that in the interest of promoting accountability the USOC "must elect future representatives to the IOC". This has not happened. Success now and in the future without any change in the status quo will depend on the extent to which the delicate balance between the two basic units of the IOC (NOCs/Sessions and IOC "nerve-center" represented by the Executive Board) is maintained, especially in terms of equitable national representation. The principal argument for the treatment of IOC members as international "employees" is apparently to protect them from the uncertainties of national politics. It was also this insulation of members from national politics that led to the development of the "exclusive club" ambiance among Ordinary and Executive Board members of the IOC.

What is clear from the outset is the apparent contradiction between the precise definition of a nation state in the Olympic Charter as an independent political entity (for NOC membership into the IOC purposes) and the practice of denying or curtailing national sovereignty at every opportunity presented. The latter practice may explain why the NOCs of many clearly non-nation states like Hong Kong, Macau, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, Netherland Antilles and other "colonies" were accepted for IOC membership. The "tolerance" shown here is again an expression of the denial of national sovereignty.

Based on a careful observation of the internal political dynamics of the WKF under the current administration, it appears that the required balance between national sovereignty and "international service" has clearly been disturbed if not violated; especially in the recent enactment of politically motivated statutes packing more power than necessary to run any

democratic organization. By separating “citizen” from “country” from the very beginning when national federations submit applications for membership (Article 5 of the 2006 Statutes on ‘Recognition and Affiliation’) the process to strip them of national sovereignty begins. In adopting Article 13.18 (“that all members of the EC of the WKF are its representatives in their respective countries and not delegates of their countries within the WKF”) and 13.19 of the 2006 Statutes, the WKF clearly set the foundation for further rejections of national sovereignty. An outcome of this is the practice of entertaining “renegades” from national federations, which infringement of national sovereignty can only weaken the legitimate authority of national federations. There is cause for alarm here, as Espinos in his many actions appears to be ignoring the importance of national federations as the basic “cell” of the WKF body, and appears determined to curtail their supreme statutory role as the ultimate sovereign authority, expressed structurally as the Congress of the WKF. Article 26 (page 61) of the WKF Rules, Regulations and Commissions (see Appendix) allows for the DLC (Disciplinary Commission appointed by the EC) and WKF-EC to make the final decision on members of the EC who are de-recognized by their national federations when this should clearly be a national prerogative. It appears that Espinos’s intent in adopting the IOC model is to concentrate all power in the EC and not to protect NOCs from the uncertainties of national politics. Instead of strengthening the sovereignty of the WKF Congress of national federations, this body has fast been reduced to a rubber stamping role for decisions taken by the EC/President. Even the “mighty” IOC tries hard to operate with the goodwill of NOCs, which in turn are given some leeway to work with their national governments. This spirit is reflected in respect shown to NOCs in the Sessions where all important final decisions are taken. When national laws govern the registration and operation of organizations, no outside body can in the final analysis ignore this much less contradict it.

The silently brewing discontent for these developments finally emerged at the EKF Congress of May 2005 in Tenerife when some members confronted the Espinos leadership on the absence of national endorsement for one of his platform-candidates for elections into the EKF-EC, Martin Culen of Slovakia. Mr. Espinos was forced to “back off” and retract his candidate Culen at the “11th hour” when he realized that this issue had the potential to unite even rivals against him. Such is the latent power of national sentiments. The Canadian National Federation appears to have had a similar problem. For many years (until 2006) their member in the EC was a candidate with controversial home-support, but won on the guaranteed Espinos platform to fill the permanent seat allocated for the 6 representatives of the 6 continental federations (in this case PKF).

New talent should be encouraged by statutory authority from within the 175 member national federations while setting term-limits for all elective and appointed posts. There also ought to be clear statutes on ethics that can also prevent “back-door” appointments of the kind that the President is allowed to make under the pretext of correcting gender equity and geographical distribution. What is apparent is that new statutes have been enacted and older ones amended to circumvent normal democratic practices by severely encroaching on issues of national sovereignty for the further consolidation of power.

The taking away of all authority from national federations as vested in their Congress will become even clearer when we dissect the 2006 Revised Statutes. All Statutes and bye-laws enacted appear to be geared towards long-term control of the entire organization by the top leadership of the President, and thanks to “platform-politics” also “his” EC. The circumstances surrounding the Slovak Karate Union’s case against the WKF and the final verdict by the Lausanne-based and IOC recognized Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS in English and TAS in French) speaks volumes in revealing the management style of the current WKF leadership under Espinos, and his future plans for this organization.

Some national federations were also concerned that KOI-affiliated organizations in their countries were using Tommy Morris’s clout in the WKF as chief-referee for privileged treatment at home with national federations. This was apparently the case for a time in India and even Malaysia. In the case of Malaysia the general lack of concern for national sovereignty was even taken a step

further by KOI when the state of Sabah is on record as having been invited to the KOI-Cup as a separate “political” entity (see www.worldkarate.net the KOI website). I cannot imagine MAKAF (national federation) and especially the Malaysian government being happy with this action which clearly infringes on an even higher political level of national sovereignty. Even though KOI-Cup is not a WKF event, Tommy Morris’s special dual-role appears to generate this and other ethical problems.

The respect for national sovereignty however need not preclude support for basic universal principles such as human rights or the General Principles of law. The balance between these two fundamental principles is a delicate one that must be respected and dealt with great care. In the case of the management practices of the WKF leadership there appears to be respect for neither national sovereignty nor the universal principle of respect for sports as an IOC-endorsed human right. This last issue is clearly revealed in statutory efforts to deliberately curtail the basic human rights of athletes to be able to compete without restrictions or “frontiers” (article 21.9 of WKF statutes).

The Slovak Karate Union (SKU) vs. the WKF/President Antonio Espinos - CAS 2003/A/443 of the IOC-recognized Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS) - SKU “no katchi” - The victory that provoked the Espinos “wrath of anger” and the subsequent “Vengeance Statute” of 2006

The case of Martin Culen of Slovakia almost set a disturbing precedent in the violation of the rights of national federations, if not for the timely intervention of the respected IOC-sanctioned Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS). This episode which took place under the current President Antonio Espinos not too long ago (2002/03) deserves close study, as it will reveal a dark side of WKF’s recent history and management-style. The case although then a significant court-victory for a member federation and a cause celebre for national sovereignty, set the stage for the 2006 “vengeance statute”, which in an unprecedented manner deprived member-federations of crucial rights.

Summary of the problem

In a letter dated 9/26/02 Martin Culen the longtime President of the Slovak Karate Union (SKU- from 1990-2002) sent an official letter to the WKF President Espinos suggesting that his federation be expelled from WKF membership and a new federation formed by him called the Slovak Federation of Karate Klubs (SKFF) be accepted instead. This letter was written while strangely being the President of both organizations. The SKU was to be expelled on the grounds that the EC had allowed member clubs to violate WKF statute 21.9 prohibiting “double affiliation/relations” with rival organizations such as the “hated” WKC (he cleverly touched on a raw nerve). It was revealed later that Culen wanted the SKU expelled because he had earlier been reprimanded formally and slated for removal by SKU’s EC (7/2/02), for precisely forming a rival national federation from “within”, for eventual WKF affiliation. It appears that without any proper investigation Mr. Espinos obliged Culen by “provisionally” expelling the SKU from the WKF (10/18/02). Soon after, the WKF proceeded to accept the SKFF as a provisional member (10/18/02) even without the required NOC (National Olympic Committee) or HSA (Highest Sporting Authority) recognition in hand.

Meanwhile the SKU through new President Daniel Liska appears to have made many legitimate but failed efforts to clarify and resolve the matter with Mr.Espinos. Apparently no answer was given to SKU’s appeal, even though Espinos visited Bratislava (Slovakia) on one occasion (27/12/02) during the whole ordeal. As a last resort the SKU brought the matter to the renowned IOC-recognized and Lausanne (Switzerland) based Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). Only then did the WKF move to respond albeit in a defensive manner, claiming that the SKU had violated WKF statutes prohibiting double affiliation. It was further alleged that the SKU had not exhausted all internal appeals processes and had violated the 21-day deadline for appeals to be

submitted to CAS. Finally they claimed that all matters concerning membership come within the purview of the WKF Congress, not an external authority such as this court of arbitration.

The Verdict

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) after hearing expert witnesses testify from both sides and studying all relevant documents, decided in favor of the SKU on 7/31/03.

Some of the Court's conclusions concerning the arbitrary actions of WKF/President Espinos deserve our careful attention. This single document may confirm beyond any doubt observations by many of an undemocratic management trend characterizing the ten-year leadership of Espinos. It may also reveal a certain leadership profile of the man. While the full text of the arbitral award is included as an appendix, allow us here to present some of the more damaging remarks of WKF leadership by this Court. Some readers may find that we have included here too many details of the text of the decision, but may we remind you that "the devil is in the details". We strongly recommend that you read the full text presented as appendix, to get a better feel for the leadership of our karate movement, in terms of their respect for national sovereignty, their own statutes, the democratic processes, and where you think their priorities lie for an organization that belongs to us all. This one document from an IOC recognized source may say a lot about the current WKF leader's potential score on any autocracy- democracy index scale.

Excerpts from the Arbitral Award text (full text is provided as appendix with the important points boxed)

The pre-2006 WKF Statute 3.3 article 1.8 entitled "Disputes" is presented in the following terms.

"Any dispute arising from the application or interpretation of the Statutes of the WKF to which the parties cannot reach an amicable settlement shall be settled by a Panel constituted pursuant to the Statutes and Regulations of arbitration of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).The parties undertake to comply with the provisions of the Statutes and Regulations....."

It is quite clear that this internal statute legitimizes the taking of this case to the CAS by the SKU, and that the WKF as an IOC recognized federation must comply with the final decision handed down by this Court. The jurisdiction of CAS in this matter is clearly not in question, and the claim by the WKF that matters of membership can only be decided by the Congress is clearly inaccurate. Yes, only the Congress will take final action, but this has to be on the basis of the decision handed down by the Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS).

CAS 2003/A/443; item 6.2; page 9

On page 10 item 7.3, the Panel's response to WKF's contention that "none of the letters written to the WKF by the SKU required a response by the WKF" is as follows.

"The Panel rejects that suggestion. It is inconsistent with the behavior that is to be expected from responsible organizations, and in particular, from international federations which are recognized by the IOC and which are responsible for ensuring the development of the Olympic spirit in accordance with the Olympic Charter".

Item 7.9 on page 11 on the conduct of the WKF reads as below;

"In the Panels opinion the conduct of the WKF ...amounted to a denial to the SKU of justice and was contrary to the general principles of law...but simply to leave a party in suspense for a lengthy period, was itself a denial of justice and contrary to the general principles of law".

Item 9.2 on suspension of SKU reads as follows;

“the Panel does find it extraordinary that the President of the WKF should suspend the SKU on the basis of merely information given to him by Mr. Culen and without any formal request for information from the SKU or any independent investigation. It is particularly extraordinary that the President should take this course when it must have been apparent that Mr. Culen was in conflict with the SKU’s Executive Committee, and was also in a position of personal conflict by reason of his position and relationship with the SFKK. When it is remembered that the information relied upon by Mr. Culen had itself largely been printed off the internet, and was unverified, the position becomes even more unsatisfactory”.

Item 9.3 regarding the EC’s action reads as follows;

“the Panel also finds it strange that the WKF’s Directing Committee Should purport to ratify the suspension of a national federation without investigating the situation, or itself requiring any communication with that national federation”.

Even without the support of his national federation (after the end of 2002), and the Arbitration Court debacle, Mr. Culen continued to hold elective EC posts in both the EKF and the WKF until the 2005 EKF Seniors in Tenerife, Spain, where in response to widespread open opposition his candidature for an EKF-EC seat was withdrawn at the “11th hour”. “Teflon Culen” as some called him, continued to maintain a conspicuous presence close to the President Espinos until the 2007 42nd EKF Seniors in of all places Slovakia, almost as if to “mock” the Slovak Karate Union. This second incident of a near general revolt in support of the SKU in Tenerife was probably “the straw that broke the Camel Espinos’s back”, to precipitate the bombshell of a constitution dropped on member national federations at WKF-18 in Tampere, Finland in October 2006. While the Culen case may be an extreme one, the practice of encouraging candidates with outstanding problems with their home federations is not limited to him.

The WKF and Constitutional Democracy

Quite unlike most democratic international sporting federations, the WKF does not have a clear preamble in the constitution protecting the spirit of national sovereignty nor are there clear guidelines for ethical conduct. In fact it is rather strange that it took 40 years for the WKF to come out with a clearly readable “constitution” to speak of (the now infamous 2006 Revised Statutes that were rubber-stamped by the WKF-18 Congress of Tampere, Finland) even though ex-President Delcourt is a lawyer by profession. Instead past “constitutions” were merely a series of unclear statutes that spelled out the “do’s and dont’s” crafted to protect the incumbent administration. These statutes were frequently altered for convenience by the President and “rubber-stamped” by the Congress. A few years into the adoption of the 2006 Revised Statutes many feel that under the Espinos administration there is a sure “tightening of the grip” on the independence of federations, and the patronage of “cronyism”. Such actions in the administration of international sports federations are almost always intended to ensure life-tenure for the President and his “merry men” within the EC. Even before we analyze the landmark Revised 2006 Statutes that brought the “axe down” on national sovereignty with the “blessings” of the “noble” Olympic Charter, let us briefly glance at a few older statutes that already set the groundwork for this trend which began during the Delcourt administration.

For example, the pre-2006 WKF statute 4.4.6 stipulates that; should any member of the EC during his period in office lose the recognition of his national body, he can continue in office if approved by a 2/3 EC vote, and even be re-elected by a 2/3 vote of the Congress. Furthermore if a candidate has been in the EC for a minimum of two four-year terms, he can present himself and be elected by a simple majority, without national support (article 10.12). This goes even beyond

even the IOC model where at least 30 candidates for elections must be endorsed by two categories of organizations. This statute sets the foundation for the development of “cronism” which appears alive and well in the ten years of the Espinos administration. Whether you are a “rookie” or a two-term or more veteran of the EC, to enjoy long life in this body you will not need national endorsement, but you will at all times need the support of Antonio Espinos.

This is contrary to the policy regarding referees who must at all times have the official support of their national federations (there is talk of making senior referees/judges independent of national federations and “owned” by the WKF, as with FIFA). This policy was put to the test and upheld at WKF 12 of 1994 in Malaysia, when a Croatian referee had to be dismissed as a WKF referee because he no longer had the support of the Croatian Karate Federation. Such may also have been the case with Alex Sternberg of the USA vis-à-vis the USANKF under arch-rival Julius Thiry. However in a more recent case at the 2004 WKF in Mexico the “sovereign” objections of the Canadian Karate Federation for a Canadian referee were clearly ignored.

Before we turn our attention to more current political developments in the WKF it is important to bear in mind that the foundations for this autocratic trend of administration was already laid under the long years of the Delcourt administration. However, ten years into the new leadership of Espinos many are already making comparisons of the two administrations, especially in trying to rate the greater of the two violators of the ethics, the general principles of law, and the norms of democratic administration.

While the foundations for autocratic rule were laid during 26 years of the Delcourt administration, the more severe infringements on democratic principles were Espinos’s contribution, especially after his embarrassing “defeat” by the Slovak Karate union in 2003. The Olympic Charter was used for what it had to offer for the emasculation of national sovereignty. What it lacked was made up through other provisions that essentially completed the destruction of all national authority by delegating all authority to the President and his EC, while “taming and transforming” the Congress of national federations into becoming a mere rubber stamp for Presidential decrees.

“Statutory Rape”- The Revised Constitution of October 2006 - the Tampere “bomb”

Even a cursory review of the WKF statutes “approved” by past Congresses will indicate that there is a history of efforts to curtail the rights of member national federations to promote the interests of the leader and his inner group, especially with regards to the choice of candidates for elections, freedom of international sporting relations and most importantly the right of legal redress against unfair practices and decisions by the WKF leadership. Prior to October 11, 2006, there was no properly drafted WKF “constitution” to speak of, but instead a series of unprofessionally composed statutes that were routinely “rubber-stamped” for approval at different sessions of the Congress. This lack of clarity was quietly and conveniently manipulated to justify actions in favor of the President and his EC. This lack of a proper Constitution/Statutes was even cited by the highly regarded Swiss based IOC-sanctioned Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS or TAS in French) in their final verdict against the WKF over the SKU (Slovak Karate Union) vs WKF case on page 12 (CAS 2003/A/443). “Indeed the Panel is of the view that the Statutes themselves need a thorough and comprehensive overhaul”. However given a karate psyche that tends to favor an autocratic style of management and the vested interests of the incumbent leadership to “stay on forever”, informed insiders have always feared that the worse was yet to come. The “quiet manipulation” of the past changed at WKF-18 in Tampere (Finland 2006) to be replaced by a deliberate and aggressive approach controlling national federations. This radical change was without a doubt the direct consequence of the 2003 CAS victory of the Slovak Karate Union against the arbitrary actions taken by President Espinos on behalf of the WKF; a change that sad to say was “abetted” by the Olympic Charter.

As mentioned above, past statutes (such as that approved at the WKF-13 Congress of 1996) did set precedents for the new more stringent infringements on the sovereignty of members in important areas such as the freedom to conduct liberal sports relations with rival organizations

(not to mention with poor federations suspended for non-payment of annual membership dues), the circumvention of election eligibility requirements for “qualified” candidates and the rights of external legal redress for aggrieved member-federations. However in the past under Delcourt all this was conducted with “quiet diplomacy” and in a non-confrontational manner. The new 2006 revised Constitution took the battle to the national federations in a very abrasive manner by requiring that the constitution of national federations must conform to that of the WKF (new membership applications have to be WKF-EC approved a priori and even worse WKF-EC members were imposed into the EC of national federations with full voting rights, as WKF “agents”). The authors of this new onslaught even made sure that where there will be discrepancy or lack of clarity, the WKF constitution will prevail (Article 5.2 of 2006 Revised Statutes). This is a rather radical constitutional change befitting a confrontational and autocratic style of management, rather than one based on constitutional democratic diplomacy.

Although now overshadowed by the “Tampere” bombshell, it is important to recognize that earlier statutes did lay the foundations for the genesis of current Presidential autocracy, but the final “falling of the axe” on the national sovereignty of all 175 members, (represented by the Congress of the WKF) took place at WKF-18 of 2006 in Finland.

It took a full 3 years of planning for the Espinos leadership to deal a blow to the recommendations of the 2003 decision against the WKF by the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). However instead of learning from a serious mistake; “holes” in the statutes were plugged-in principally through a selective use of the Olympic Charter, to discourage and penalize national federations from ever again taking infractions against them to external sources of jurisdiction, such as the CAS.

This was cleverly and rather easily done by an “innocent” emulation of the “parent” Olympic Charter related to NOCs (Bye-Laws to Rules 28 and 29). While the Olympic Charter was designed to protect delegates from the uncertainties of national politics, the 2006 WKF Statutes appears designed to strip national federations of all authority vis-à-vis the President/EC of the WKF, as basically “revenge” for the 2003 defeat at the hands of the Slovak Karate Union.

For this reason WKF-18 will in future be known more for what happened at the Congress than for all the action on the tatami. Not only were the statutes laid out more clearly for the first time since the founding of the WKF as WUKO in 1970, but the rights of national federations were blatantly encroached upon as never before. All this was in direct response to the victory of one national federation (SKU) that dared to challenge an arbitrary expulsion order against it by WKF President Espinos. It is rather sad that instead of welcoming a wrong that was righted and behaving “statesman-like”, the WKF leader appears to have clearly retreated further into an autocratic mode by retaining statutes criticized by the Arbitration Court in 2003 and introducing new far more stringent ones as well. Article 13.18 and 13.19 set the tone for this trend. This action has in effect “tightened the noose” severely on the sovereign rights of national federations that are respected by the general principles of international law through time immemorial. While some articles are old (pre-Espinos) and others new, they both lead towards increased autocracy. It is a shame that none other than the Olympic Charter served as the model for the new more “oppressive” 2006 WKF Revised Statutes. When you think about it, it is quite understandable that the Olympic Charter is designed this way, as it represents the private interests of a private organization. National federations on the other hand represent people and the public, embodied in our karate movement as the Congress of the WKF. However, unlike the Olympic Charter, the constitutions of all national federations (including National Olympic committees) are in the final analysis legally bound by national law and not the Olympic Charter. Here are some of the more “violent” infractions of national federation sovereignty found in the new Statutes, but some appear to have a history.

1. **New.** The statutes of national federations must be pre-approved by the WKF before they can be recognized, and are subordinate to WKF statutes (**Article 5.2**). **Art.5.3** requires that “Rules and Regulations of the National Federations

- members shall conform to the principles of the WKF Rules and Regulations”. When in doubt the WKF statutes will always prevail. Transitional Disposition #7 of the 2006 Revised Statutes also mandates that “the WKF Continental federations and National Federations will have a period of 2(two) years to adapt their Statutes in order to conform to the principles of these Statutes after their approval”.
2. **New.** Addition pertaining to actions of individual and club members. If a National Federation, the members that form that National Federation or an individual member of that National Federation contravenes the Statutes of the WKF, or for any reason of discipline, the WKF may restrain or suspend the activities of this Federation or individual member, in accordance with the WKF Statutes and the Disciplinary Rules. Any disciplinary action taken by the WKF must also be applied inside the corresponding Continental Federation (**Article 21.3 & 21.8**). An entire federation can be punished for the actions of individuals or member-clubs.
 3. **New.** EC members are automatically WKF representatives with vote, in EC and Congress of national federations. **Article 13.18 & 13.19.**
 4. **New emphasis.** “Affiliated members and individuals shall commit themselves to accept no authority other than the one of the WKF. An appeal before the Court of Arbitration for Sport (TAS/CAS) is only possible after having exhausted all the internal resources foreseen in the WKF statutes and Disciplinary Rules”. **Article 21.12.**
 5. **New.** Full Membership with voting rights only after a 2-year provisional status (after approval by the Congress) without voting rights. **Article 5.9.**
 6. **New.** All appointed members of Permanent Commissions must have national endorsement except the Chairmen. **Article 10.10**
 7. **New.** WKF President will be a full member of the EC of the Continental Federations.
 8. **Old.** Presidential Emergency Powers in “emergency situations” over EC and Congress that shall later be ratified by them.
 9. **Old.** EC members with at least two 4 year terms of service (need not be consecutive but within the last 4 terms) can present themselves for elections like regular candidates. 1 term EC members are exempt if they have a 2/3 EC support to remaining office till term-end; and 2/3 Congress support to contest elections when they come around. **Article 10.11.**
 10. **Old.** The EC/President will have the right to co-opt “a number of additional females” members into the EC if this is considered lacking by the EC after elections. **Article 13.4**
 11. **New.** The EC can appoint an extra member (concealed Presidential prerogative)
 12. **Old.** President/EC can appoint/revoke continental representatives into EC with 3/5 EC majority. Can also co-opt for vacant positions. **Article 13.8**
 13. **Article 21.9** expressly prohibits their national federations, and their components from double affiliation with any karate organization as it may be determined by

the WKF Executive Committee to be a dissenting organization. **New. Article 5.3** mandates that “National Federation members will not schedule or participate in any international activities which contravene the aforementioned competition rules (that is WKF Competition Rules)”.

14. **New. Article 22.1** regarding Amendments to the Statutes reads; “Proposals to amend these Statutes may be put forward by the Executive Committee or by affiliated National federations having voting rights. In the case of National Federations, proposals must be presented to the Executive Committee by at least 50% + (half plus one) of all affiliated National Federations having voting rights”. This article makes it easy for the EC to engineer amendments and a lot more difficult for National Federations to do the same.

15. **New. Article 26; ‘WKF Rules, Regulations & Commissions’; page 61.(Revised 01/16/05)**. According to this provision, both appointed and elected members of the WKF-EC who are expelled by their National Federations can now submit an appeal to the DLC (Disciplinary Commission that is EC-appointed). The WKF-EC will make all final decisions based on the DLC recommendations, which will be binding on all National Federations.

It is clear from the above material that while some older statutes of Presidential authority such as that concerning expulsion for relations with “prohibited” national federations/rival organizations and exemption of national endorsement of “qualified” candidates for President-EC were kept intact, new ones were introduced that have radically invaded national authority traditionally/statutorily vested in the WKF Congress. There are new statutes added that require that all new applications for membership must have their constitution approved a priori by the WKF-EC; while article 5.3 requires that rules and regulations of current members “conform to the principles of WKF rules and regulations”. As if this was not enough, as mentioned earlier article 13.18 and 13.19 mandate that WKF-EC members will also be full members of the EC and Congress of their respective national federations. To make matters worse while any EC-member who is expelled from a national federation can appeal his case to the WKF EC-appointed Disciplinary Commission (DLC), the recommendations of the DLC will be used by the WKF-EC to make a final decision that will be binding on national federations (see appendix for Article 26 of ‘WKF Rules, Regulations & Commissions, page 61). Under this administration, the “long arm” of central authority has reached the four corners of what used to be the sovereign world of 175 or so national karate federations. For example, current and future “homeless” charlatans with close ties to the President and who have never held elected office in their home-federations (or have serious problems with them) now have a lot to be thankful for Article 13.18. In one swift move the WKF has imposed her ultimate will over member federations.

The new 2006 constitution “approved” by a Congress battered over time into becoming a rubber-stamping agency for Presidential agendas (the ultimate “hara-kiri”), is a mix of mild older and brutal new encroachments into the sovereignty of national federations, a sovereignty that enjoyed a lot more legal authority and status in pre-Espinos times. The need to control national federations became especially imperative after the WKF’s CAS debacle against the Slovak Karate Union in July 2003, and the 2005 (Tenerife) SKU-led opposition to President Espinos’ endorsement of Culen for the EKF-EC. It is rumored strongly that the EC appointed Referees Commission and her “long arm” is also used to quietly influence national federations into tamely tolerating the new invasions of their sovereignty.

However in the long run the response to tighten the grip will only worsen the situation, not to mention confirm already existing incremental perceptions of the current President as an intransigent and vengeful leader lacking democratic vision, much like the old Japanese masters. The CAS/TAS 2003/A/443 case of the Slovak Karate Union and the WKF leadership’s response to this (the 2006 Revised Statutes approved at WKF-18 in Tampere, Finland) may well give us all a clue as to where the WKF’s politics of leadership is headed. Clearly it does not appear that this

will be in the direction of greater democratic norms and practices. The question is will national federations at some point fight this autocratic trend of “for the few by the few” with the help of their national Olympic Committees and an outraged public (through the national media) or will they succumb and get used to what will at best be a kind of “benevolent dictatorship”. Such infractions of national sovereignty should have no place in a democratic society much less a sports organization. It should be incomprehensible for democratic minds as to why such excessive undemocratic authority is required for the proper running of an international sports federation. The “national connection” is the only viable threat to the oligarchy at the top, and it is for this and no other reason that all kinds of devices are designed to “barricade” the few at the top from the “tyranny of the masses” which in this case is the Congress of the WKF. It is for this and other reasons that the UN Charter mandates respect for national sovereignty and that the very existence of the “elitist” Security Council composed of a “club” of the big powers has come under serious question (UN Charter-Chapter 1 Article 2, paragraph 4).

Time to test some or all of these articles in Court/CAS.

It is rather surprising that some if not all of these undemocratic statutes have not been “tested” in courts such as the Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS). It is very probable that Articles such as 21.9 and 13.18/19 will be stricken down by CAS as against democracy and the General Principles of Law. Given the precedent set by the Slovak Karate Union (SKU) in 2003, now is the time to test all undemocratic articles of the 2006 WKF Statute to reset this karate organization on a proper democratic course.

IOC ‘Sports for All Commission’ defines Sports as a basic Human Right

The WKF’s statutory prohibition of participation in alternative platforms of karate competition by athletes (article 21.9) violates the basic tenet of the IOC’s ‘Sports for All’ Commission that unrestrained participation in sports is a basic human right. This 1985 IOC-established Commission in advocating participation as a basic human right is clearly against prohibitive boundaries of any kind and is based on the age-old recognition that free sporting relations builds a better world by bringing even “enemies” together, as was achieved by the ancient Greek Olympic Games. Thus the WKF statute prohibiting relations with rivals ITKF,WKC and now her splinter-group WUKO (changed to WUKF) clearly goes against the basic human right of free participation recognized by the IOC (see the ‘Sports for All Commission at www.olympic.org) and thus stands as an organized impediment to a friendlier world.

Prohibition of double affiliation- free competition vs monopoly. Article 21.9 of WKF Revised Statutes 2006 reads as follows:

“The WKF expressly prohibits their National Federations and their components from double affiliation with any karate organization determined by the WKF EC to be a dissenting organization. National federations and their members are prohibited from having sporting relations with rival (as defined by the EC) organizations not recognized by the WKF or with member federations suspended over non-payment of fees or for disciplinary reasons”.

While this prohibition is directed principally at the World Karate Confederation (WKC), an international karate organization formed in 1996 by ex-WKF/Delcourt men (led until recently by F. Wedland of ex-WUKO fame), article 21.9 has recently been interpreted more conservatively to be even more prohibitive (requesting prior “clearance” before competing in non-WKF events at the national and international levels). The WKC and other smaller international organizations are becoming attractive as an alternate platform for less than elite competition for those who find the current WKF politics rather alienating or who have been deliberately kept out of the organization. It also has to be said that frustrations at the national level have also been responsible for a growing WKC and now a splinter group WUKO (formed after the 2005 Brazil WKC championship and going by WKF’s birth-name until 1993 of WUKO and recently changed to WUKF). Unlike the

WKF, the WKC and WUKF in accepting all karate associations and not just national governing bodies, provides easier access to international competition. Given that the majority of athletes will not get into the national teams headed for WKF events (only first place winners), this avenue becomes a rare opportunity for them to compete internationally. Additionally it is to say the least "cruel" to prevent athletes from such an experience. The temptation of cross-competition by members of the WKF karate arena has clearly become a cause for alarm by the WKF leadership, but their response can only be construed as a "clan" mentality that goes against the pride that all athletes feel about competing across borders without constraints. The "threat" of a desire for uninhibited competition recently provoked Mr. Espinos and his Secretary General Yerolimpos into sending separate "warning" letters to a largely EKF audience to try to stem the tide of cross-affiliation and competition (7th April 2008) in the form of a rather emotional appeal that WKF people "stick within the WKF family", just like the Mafia organization's essential tenet, "la Cosa Nostra". Where is the respect for the "forces of the free market" and the spirit of globalization that the new millennium was supposed to have ushered in with a vengeance, against the recent history of autocracy, style-karate and closed societies?

Additionally, Article 21.9 is also intended to coerce poor federations into paying their annual membership dues. Is it appropriate behavior for a democratic international sporting federation to punish financially delinquent poorer members by prohibiting fraternal relations between rich and poor ones? Additionally, article 21.8 allows for the suspension of an entire National Federation for the actions of individual members. What enormous power over the sanctity of national sovereignty? Pressure has already been brought to bear on some national federations to expel members who have engaged in deemed "illegal" sporting relations, and for federation-endorsed tournaments to strictly exclude athletes who have participated in rival organizations such as the WKC, WUKO, ITKF and others. This was apparently the case when Karate England (October 2005) unsuccessfully exerted pressure on a longtime member association the Higashi Karate-Kai (HKK), as per WKF instructions. More recently the English Karate Federation that was established in mid-2007 has applied even greater pressure on members and potential members to comply with Article 21.9 of the WKF Statutes, causing further divisions in the English karate scene. The expulsion of the Slovak Karate Union by the WKF was also provoked by precisely such an accusation (which proved to be false). Most recently there is also concern expressed on 'Karate Underground' (internet site) about the newly formed English Karate Federation threatening action against members for "wayward" relations with unrecognized groups. It is being suggested that such a policy by the EKF may even be in violation of European Union rules. It is also interesting that the wrath of the WKF on this issue of cross membership-competition appears to be only selectively administered.

Selective punishment?

While some suspected "transgressors" were pursued aggressively (citing article 21.8 and 21.9 of the 2006 Statutes), others involved with the WKC like the well known Shito-kai karate master in Spain Y. Ishimi (man who pioneered Shito-ryu karate in Spain and Europe after arriving there in 1965) appear to have been given free rein (Article 21.3 of WKF Statutes does say clearly that national federations will be held responsible for the actions of individuals and club members). Instead "transgressor" Ishimi who was openly active in the WKC since 1996 (has organized many shito-ryu seminars for the WKC) was in 2005 awarded the 9th dan by the WKF-affiliated Spanish Karate Federation, RFEK y DA). Not only was he given this award, Ishimi's students routinely participated in WKC events without consequences (as per internet site news). Ishimi's involvement in the WKC hits a lot closer to home (given his stature and influence in Spain and the Spanish leadership of the WKF) than the others like the Slovak Karate Union who were harassed on the basis of false information of involvement with the WKC obtained on internet karate-gossip (a fact that emerged thanks to the CAS/TAS, the Lausanne based IOC-recognized Court of Arbitration for Sports). Why has the WKF President or Secretariat not in any way reprimanded the Spanish Karate Federation (RFEKyDA) for bestowing such high honors on someone who by WKF Statutes, "collaborated" with that arch "enemy" the WKC? Many have wondered if Ishimi's Court connections (the Royal Court of Spain) through his longtime student HRH Adan Czatorski

(now occasionally involved with the WKC) had anything to do with the special treatment-protection accorded to him. It is also possible that the Spanish Karate Federation is pushing the limits of national sovereignty in posing this challenge to the WKF with apparent disregard for fellow countryman Antonio Espinos.

The other prominent national federation that also appears to have been treated "special" is the USA National Karate Federation (USANKF). Prominent champions of the USANKF such as John Fonseca, George Kotaka (competed at WKC-4 2003 in Russia) and Elisa Au have not only competed in the WKF and WKC arenas, but actually won medals in both. Miss Au (the only athlete ever to win 2 individual kumite gold medals at a single WKF championships; WKF-17 in 2004 until Aghayev equaled her in 2008) in fact has won the gold medal in yet a third rival world karate organization, the smaller and lesser known World Karate Organization (WKO). In fact the head of her organization in Hawaii Mr. Chuzo Kotaka is cited on the WKC-active AAU website as the chief technical director. When these and other American athletes did compete, they did so under the banner of the other large and respected American karate organization of old, the AAU. However the USANKF has never been threatened by the WKF for overlooking what was clearly cross-competition by her "own" elite athletes. There are those who are convinced that the USANKF was left alone essentially for fear of a sure "Yankee" retaliation in court and the fact that the USANKF "karate market" is too large to be alienated. The USANKF has probably been respectfully notified by the WKF. This explains why some of their elite "transgressors" have been quietly asked by the USANKF to write letters promising no further involvement with rival organizations.

We are in no way suggesting that "trespassers" who engage in cross-competition be punished. On the contrary we applaud these American free-spirited "pioneers" and hope that more national federations will tolerate and even encourage such cross-competition (within national boundaries and beyond) in the name of increased fraternity, athletic excellence and the exercise of democracy through choices, not to mention the IOC's clear recognition of sports as a human right. Nowhere in the Olympic Charter is there even the slightest attempt to punish athletes and organizations from competing where they want (the last 3 fundamental principles of the Olympic Charter expresses this spirit unequivocally in saying; "sports is a human right", and no boundaries must be placed in the free expression of this right that fosters the mixing of young people). We say that no one has the right to prohibit this human right from free expression anywhere, in the form of fraternal competitions. In addition selective punishment (especially ignoring "renegade" referees and their violations of article 21.9) is discriminatory and therefore very wrong. Monopolistic designs against choices sooner or later erode democracy and must not be tolerated in the new global politics of more free people. The problem emerges when even leaders of democratic organizations always seem to have excuses to seek more authority, which almost always leads to the dangerous erosion of fundamental rights such as that of athletes to compete anywhere and everywhere, a human right supported by the IOC. Even at the height of the Cold War the freedom to compete everywhere was respected by all sides.

Based on a brief comparative review, it is our observation that such an environment of the manipulation of democratic norms appears especially acute within sporting organizations, both national and international. We hope that this does not in some way reveal a predisposition for autocracy in sportsmen and thereby in sports circles more than elsewhere. In any case free and democratic-spirited karatekas must resist all efforts by the WKF leadership to systematically deprive athletes of the freedom to compete as "karatekas sans frontiers". For their efforts in this, the cross-competitors from the USA must be applauded as "pioneers" of a just cause. Isolation whether within a style or an organization is an unhealthy past that members must no longer tolerate, as it inhibits growth of the body and especially the mind. We are of the opinion that while leaders of rival international karate organizations can have their differences and even refrain from fraternal contacts, such practices must not filter down to their athletes. Athletes must not be prevented from competing with each other, exchanging techniques (remembering that the best techniques emerge from competition arenas with no style-restrictions or political barriers) and most importantly fostering friendships. Need we remind you of how much the karate world lost

through all those years of forced Japanese isolation along styles, best exemplified in the continued intransigent karate politics of isolation practiced by Mr. Nishiyama and his ITKF. Such undemocratic and anti-human relations conduct is unbecoming of the leadership of an Olympic karate movement of the future and contrary to principal spirit of the Olympic and UN Charters. The right to compete any where is an individual choice that must not be mandated by international sporting federations with hegemonic designs. Besides the free mingling of athletes, especially between rival organizations, only helps create a larger arena for advancements through competition and as a consequence, greater international understanding. Any bureaucratic effort to block this must be challenged.

Pressure on National Federations to implement Article 21.9 is an assault on the recognition of Sports as a Human Right by the International Olympic Committee

The Espinos leadership is clearly super sensitive to competition for the “alle giance” of athletes by rival international organizations, even those that pose no threat at all to the lucrative IOC-franchise held solely by the WKF. This was clearly expressed in the blatant suspension of a legitimate national federation (the Slovak Karate Union) in October of 2002 merely on the basis of vague internet gossip regarding cross competition with athletes of the rival World Karate Confederation (WKC). The final verdict by the Court of Arbitration for Sports in favor of the SKU in 2003 showed clearly that Espinos’s action was not only arbitrary but irrational as well, and contrary to the General Principles of Law found in all legitimate democracies of the Western European kind. However it seems that this major legal setback has not stopped him from actively pursuing further what appears to have become an “obsession”.

In recent months specific pressure is being applied on national federations by the WKF to eliminate cross-competition by requiring that federation-endorsement be refused to tournaments that are even slightly “contaminated” by cross-competitors. The most recent case of such action concerns the DKF’s (German Karate Federation) decision to hold even a past history of cross-competition against a member club (case of Thomas Peters being forced to cancel his well attended and respected 2008 Open Karate Cup even after he agreed to comply with all requirements of the DKF; which case has headed to the German court system, but should also have been submitted to CAS/TAS). Imagine the problems one will encounter at large tournaments as to which athletes are “tainted”. I wonder if such vigilance is being kept at Tommy Morris’s large KOI-CUP tournaments and even some of the smaller KOI championships at the national level such as the KOI-Italian Open? The WKF President and Secretary General were informed (Dec.2008/Jan.2009) of a possible major infraction of Article 21.9 in Puerto Rico in which the most senior American referee and President of the PR karate federation were recently involved in a referees seminar conducted by the former in which well known WUKO members/referees took part. We hope that Article 21.9 is not just being used against athletes and organizers of tournaments, but also against deviant referees. We have also heard from reliable English sources that known “infractions” of Article 21.9 was not an impediment to competing in KOI tournaments. The WKF’s response or lack thereof will show if allegations of selective punishment have any validity. The recently formed probationary WKF member the English Karate Federation has openly advertised in her 1st edition newsletter KONNICHIIWA (February 2008) that members comply with article 21.9 of WKF Statutes and not compete at the 9th March 2008 NNGBEK Championships. In fact all members are made to sign a disclaimer that reads, “All member Association’s events have Association agreement that their events are in compliance with section 21.9 of the World Karate Federation Statutes. All events advertised here are only open to EKF/WKF members”. We think that this policy not only violates the IOC’s clear recognition of sports as a basic human right but even more it is a serious blemish on the tradition of liberal participation in sports above politics that the English have always prided themselves in. And whatever happened to the universal sense of karate brotherhood of modern times that we often brag of to non-karate folks, or should we behave like old times in Japan as students of specific styles and organizations forever in rivalry? At a time when the IOC is trying very hard to promote greater sports participation among youth using strong pre-Beijing Olympic campaigns such as “The Best of Us” to foster key Olympic values of Excellence, Friendship and Respect” (see IOC Press Release of 3rd July 2008), the WKF in enacting and imposing Article 21.9 is actually working against this important campaign by restricting the free movement of athletes. We would really like to know what the world of Olympic and other sports will think of this WKF policy of telling athletes where they can and cannot compete, when the issue becomes more public in the general sports world. This policy is sure to make us a “divided sport” a lot more than the challenge posed in the past by Nishiyama and the ITKF. We do not think that such statutory imposition on the free movement of athletes will ever be received well by the world community of athletes. We think therefore that the leadership of the WKF should behave in a more magnanimous fashion by respecting the rights of fellow karate organizations to live side by side in harmony and not react in a paranoid fashion by building a “statutory barricade” the way they have

in article 21.9. As the sole IOC-recognized karate federation there is no viable threat or rival to the WKF; but monopolistic designs always tend to perceive all others as a threat. Meanwhile at the expense of looking ridiculous, it will help members all over the world if the WKF Secretariat puts out an official list of “banned” organizations and not wait for members to tread unknown grounds, “trip the wire” and face harsh consequences. The Puerto Rican karate group that this author was advisor to wrote to the WKF Secretariat recently (December 2008) for guidance on this matter but the long delayed answer from Yerolimpos merely said that the matter was being considered and that an answer will be forthcoming from the continental federation. The strategy to avoid the issue at the top appears to be to get national and continental federations to do the “dirty job” of applying the “law” upholding article 21.9 through warnings and sanctions.

The WKF’s role as the only IOC recognized body is in no way threatened by the existence of other smaller international initiatives such as the WKC, WUKO/WUKF and even old arch rival for IOC recognition, the ITKF. However these other initiatives do serve as a useful arena of complementary competition-experience for all athletes. As genuine karatekas we must unequivocally reject all divisive anti-athlete decrees that essentially emerge from the paranoid perceptions of a select leadership, ever fearful of imaginary threats to their ambitions of long term tenure. If we truly believe in the Olympic spirit and Charter, ours must be a karate movement without man-made political barriers. With the strength of the karate spirit to guide us, we must never fear competition from rivals; on the contrary we must welcome them. Anything less is “cowardice” by any name. One unfortunate consequence of this unique statute is the prohibition of sporting relations between richer members in good financial standing and delinquent poorer federations of the developing world suspended for outstanding debts. In the interest of global harmony the most valuable contribution that the WKF can make towards this goal is to adopt a “live and let live” policy with regards to all rival karate organizations.

It is a shame that we finally emerged from years of isolation imposed by style-karate politics only to be back where we started. It appears that the isolation of the politics of style from a Japanese-controlled past has now been replaced by a clear WKF statute prohibiting relations with rival organizations, in clear violation of the IOC’s recognition of sports as a human right. We cannot imagine Article 21.9 being upheld if brought before the Court of Arbitration for Sports in Lausanne by an aggrieved party. Sooner or later this is where it is going to land and result in yet another blow registered for eternity against the WKF and Mr. Antonio Espinos’s leadership.

The irony of it all is the fact that many of the principal national federations within the WKF such as the FFKDA (France) and the RFEF y DA (Spain) are “composite” federations that represent karate and other related martial arts, some of which almost duplicate karate (such as contact karate in the FFKDA). This has gone on for years without apparent problems and yet a very hard-line conservative view has been adopted by the current WKF leadership when it comes to athletes and member-clubs participating in events organized by so called “rival” organizations or extending invitations to them for events. Article 21.9 of the WKF Statutes is being invoked for even the slightest evidence/suspicion of such contact, which has made many members nervous to the point of perceiving it as the perfect instrument for a “witch-hunt”. If we had visionary leadership they must realize that searches for alternatives emerge out of frustrations from within. Those who feel victimized by a national federation or WKF politics are forced to seek easier and cheaper alternatives. So organizations like the WKC and the new WUKF become alternatives for those who feel aggrieved one way or another. Increasing frustrations may also explain their increasing growth. It will be a mistake to under-estimate their importance, bearing in mind that IOC-recognition for the WKF was withheld between 1985 and 1999, precisely because karate was considered a “divided sport”. In a sense the closed-door policy of article 21.9 of the WKF statutes may well divide our sport as never before.

Democracy is all about choices and clearly the WKC and the new WUKO fill a void for those who because of problems at the national or international level may have had no recourse to decent international competition. It is not easy to understand why even with sole monopoly of IOC recognition the WKF has to feel threatened because consumers of karate now have alternatives

and easier access to international membership and competitions. Is it not a shame that those who finish second in their nationals can only watch the world championships not compete in them? Why should they not be allowed to compete in smaller rival world tournaments if the opportunity presents itself? Maybe it is that the fear of fair competition has led to a paranoid desire for “total controls”. We can understand a paranoia against all things ITKF and Nishiyama because of the damage they did to our Olympic dreams and the fact that they have their own distinct set of rules quite different from that of the WKF, but a blanket condemnation of everybody is going too far and violating the IOC-recognized definition of sports participation as a basic human right. If the paranoia is carried to extremes you cannot as a WKF system member compete in your style tournament, if the head of the style is involved with rival organizations. Obviously there has to be some limit placed on the strict application of article 21.9. Sensible and visionary leadership will not only welcome such competition but also look for ways of bringing back those who were expelled, left or kept out, by encouraging national federations to be more “inclusive” through greater tolerance of differences and petty politics. The unrestrained use of article 21.9 can only lead to unnecessary “witch hunts” and a generally suspicious ambiance. WKF President Espinos must be guided by a “live and let live” policy and not engage in the vicious hot pursuit of athletes seeking good competition. In any case, efforts to achieve total isolation of the WKF from other organizations will fail as this is one police watch that will be near impossible to maintain. This will be like keeping track of “who slept with whom” for an AIDS-watch program. The near paranoid reaction of the WKF leadership to free fraternal relations in the karate world clearly shows the lack of respect for the IOC’s regard of sport as a basic human right and democracy. It is also the response of a leadership without the kind of statesman-like vision that this world needs more of. We wonder how article 21.9 will be received by the soon to be held IOC International Forum on Sports for Peace and Development (7-8 May 2009 in Lausanne). How will this prohibition of free sports competition promote peace and development?

The Chief-Referee/Chairman of the WKF Referees Commission - un-elected source of influence and power for 24 years.

This un-elected position is without a rival as a powerful and potentially lucrative post in the WKF system. It is the post that most affects athletes and whose long arm is able to reach national federations at “home” through the refereeing system the position chairs. The Chairman of the Referees Commission is the de facto Chief-Referee and “head honcho” of the entire refereeing system in the WKF. The never ending quest for increased certification of their referees by national federations, also gives the Chief-Referee a power over these federations that many feel is improper for an un-elected official to have. The potential for abuse stemming from this power over athletes and national federations is the reason that this position must become an elective one and not remain an appointed instrument of the leadership to “reward or punish”. Not only is this a most powerful instrument in the hands of an appointed man, but it is also a potentially powerful weapon of coercion in the hands of those who appoint him, specifically the WKF President. Federation’s can be coerced to sway one way or another on issues of importance to the WKF leadership and the story is that this has been done. Such a use of the Chief-Referee will also allow the powers to be to have “cleaner hands”. What better weapon for use in federation politics than an insecure and vulnerable appointed Chairman of the Referees Commission who will be willing to do anything to keep being appointed to the position indefinitely?

Developments of recent years having to do with a conflict of interest between the current chief-referee’s official position and the promotion of his private karate organization called Kobe Osaka International (KOI) has thrown a cloud of suspicion over the appointed Chairman of the Referees Commission. There appears to have been a precedent for this though. In the early years of Japanese control there was also an EC-appointed Chief-Referee, the most notorious being Teruo Hayashi aka “bull-dog”. This was followed by the “troika” Referees Council of 3 with a chairman who appeared to be the “first” among equals. Then at the 2004 EKF’s in Moscow, a “revolutionary” enlarged 8-member peer-elected Referees Commission was introduced for the European Karate Federation (but the all-powerful Chairman continued to be EC-appointed), while at the highest WKF-level the newly formed 15-member Referees Commission continues to be

completely appointed by the EC, including the Chairman. While there is finally an appearance of democracy through elections in the refereeing system at the EKF level (Chairman continues to be appointed though), in reality power is now in the hands of 1 person, the EC-appointed Chairman of a completely appointed Referees Commission at the highest WKF level (leading some to wonder why democracy was introduced in the EKF where it does not matter but not in the WKF where it does). As mentioned earlier without a doubt the Chief-Referee is the most important non-elective post within the WKF in terms of influence over national federations through their referees and athletes (and probably also the position with the most lucrative potential). In many ways this post is perceived to exert more power over athletes and national federations than the EC that makes the appointment. As mentioned a President can use it effectively to persuade national federations to go one way or another on issues requiring the approval of the Congress, because national federations are always craving for more of their referees to be certified and promoted. It is not the position but the potential for abuse that has many insiders wondering if this position should not be an elected one bound by a stricter "job description" involving private activity outside of official WKF parameters, and strict apolitical conduct in the performance of duties.

In theory the Chairman of the Referees Commission is required to be impartial and above internal politics. In practice however it appears that he has great freedom of "movement" and political latitude to conduct the "master's calling". Tommy Morris the un-elected long-serving incumbent of this position from the past Delcourt administration appears to wield great power and influence. Many believe that this power may have been compromised for private benefit, initially by Teruo Hayashi who started it all as Chairman of the then Referees-Council and now by Tommy Morris the current Chairman of the Referees Commission. Both appear to have used their influential WKF positions to benefit the expansion plans of their respective private karate organizations, namely Hayashi-ha Shito-ryu International and the Kobe-Osaka International (also "fondly" known as "KOI") respectively. This "mix" appears to have created a clear conflict of interest for incumbent Tommy Morris and become the subject of much negative private discourse within the WKF. Before this development became "visibly public", there appears to have been greater approval of his role as Chief-Referee within the Referees Council of 3 of the past. It is said that he was knowledgeable and appeared visibly committed to providing athletes with the best rules and referees possible. Most importantly the refereeing system was kept clear, simple and fair to athletes praying for good calls. Gradually however, under his supervision this once simple and effective system was altered many times to become unnecessarily lengthy and complicated for aspiring juniors to complete the entire process. It was also made into a continuous process without end, as even the highest grades had to be re-certified after 2-4 years. The general consensus inside is that these changes were both politically and probably also financially motivated. It is common knowledge that "structural changes" are sometimes created for partisan benefit of one kind or another. It seems that politically, Tommy Morris was able to "axe" his principal rivals in the triumvirate of the past Referees Council of 3, by getting the EC to go along with his "democratic coup" of an appointed Referees Commission of 15 (essentially filled with his protégées) with him as the appointed Chairman. For purposes of greater controls, this is an improvement of the preceding system of a Referees Council of 3 where there was a tacit rule that the three EC appointments will come from Europe, Asia and the Pan-American continent. Where before there was a Referees Council of three equals, now there is a single powerful appointed Chairman. Financially the many exams that are now required to proceed through the ranks lasting 9 long years (assuming you do not fail any) became a financial bonanza for the WKF treasury. It did not hurt that on a smaller scale this "complication" appears to have also brought benefits to the chairman personally (through the sale of his CDs on rules and lucrative per diems to conduct rules seminars/exams all over the WKF world). The lengthening and consequent complication of this once much simpler and effective process appears to have converted the refereeing system into a "money-making mill" for the WKF leadership that brought absolutely no financial relief to struggling referees who work without compensation.

The WKF- KOI conflict of interest, "a well-kept secret"

In anticipation of problems relating to conflicts of interest (CIR), the WKF statutes include clear rules to deal with such problems before they get out of hand (partial text of CIR is provided in appendix). In practice it appears that these rules have not been strictly implemented in clear cases involving conflicts of interest. If they have been implemented, this has never been made public to the general membership. The most visible case appears to be that of Tommy Morris the Chief-Referee of the WKF, in terms of the apparent use of his position in the WKF as the Chairman of the Referees Commission to promote his private international karate enterprise called KOI. This is a special link that smells of a clear conflict of interest that for some unknown reason appears to have been ignored by the Espinos leadership of the WKF. It is however the "hottest" topic of quiet conversation and possibly one of the greatest suppressed internal grievances felt within refereeing and other circles of the WKF.

In addition to being the undisputed "head honcho" of the WKF refereeing system (and until 2006 also of the EKF) for what appears like a "lifetime" (since 1986), Tommy Morris is also owner of the Scotland-based karate organization, the Kobe-Osaka International or "KOI", which was founded in 1991. From about 1997 onwards KOI spread her Shukokai Shito-ryu brand of karate rather aggressively to the four corners of the WKF-world, allegedly facilitated by Morris's position as Chief-Referee of the EKF and the WKF. To many the KOI website (www.worldkarate.net) is strongly suggestive of a formal link with the WKF. This "link" appears to have benefited KOI in her expansion plans to such an extent where in 2007 KOI claimed "associated partners" in more than 40 countries. As a consequence the large attendance at the annual KOI-Cup tournament is the very envy of the largest of world karate events (as per the KOI website; 31 countries and 1200 athletes competed at the 2002 KOI Cup in Dresden, Germany).

Conflict of interest or just coincidence?

It has been suggested that as the Chief-Referee of the WKF Tommy Morris is positioned well to promote KOI's expansion plans, but as we shall see the "mixing" of the two roles can be ethically problematic for the WKF. As Chief-Referee of the WKF Morris is invited by national federations the world over to conduct rules clinics and exams to certify referees. It appears that occasionally he is also invited by private groups (such as for the Big Apple Challenge of New York) to do the same. These invitations come with lucrative per diems and are often times just gatherings to "bond" with the Chief-Referee and head of KOI. Under normal circumstances such private invitations should not matter except when organizers of such events have running problems with their national federations, in which case the role of the WKF can be compromised. The presence of the Chief-Referee at a problematic-function may be perceived as meddling into internal affairs. Such a situation may have arisen in the past in a case concerning the USA National Karate Federation, at the now defunct Big Apple Challenge (where it was said that Morris got "in between" the then President of the USANKF Julius Thiry and longtime USANKF "elder" (ex-national coach and WKF referee) Alex Sternberg, the promoter of the event. Then there are apparently cases of national federations irate over the Chief-Referee's admission of "trouble makers" into KOI and thereby Morris's confidence. Such dealings may be construed as inappropriate and provocative conduct invading national sovereignty. The fact of the matter is that there appears to be a "rush" to join KOI or be associated with her events in some way on the part of both junior and senior referees of the WKF refereeing system. Many have noticed that the same prominent referees routinely attend both the WKF and KOI events, which now includes senior Japanese referees as well. It is generally admitted that attendance at KOI events is simply "to pay respects" and bond with the "head-honcho" for "protection and perceived" benefits. With the phenomenal growth of KOI in recent years, the "special" link between KOI and the WKF has become a very visible "coincidence" if not a conflict of interest between the "general good" that the WKF represents and the private gains of KOI that he also represents. The subtle but sure use of this "link" to promote KOI is probably a violation of standing WKF rules on conflicts of interest (CIR) and general principles of ethical conduct. What may appear to some as the successful use of the power of persuasion to encourage attendance at KOI events may be unfair to those who

feel coerced to attend but have to remain silent because of the apparent patronage shown for the situation by the WKF leadership.

As a show of respect for the sovereignty of national federation (whatever remains of this) the Chief-Referee of the WKF must be mandated to deal only with official federation sanctioned programs and prohibited from "roaming". Operating "outside" of this can potentially weaken member federations as effective governing bodies. Respect for national authority and sovereignty must be upheld as a basic principle by all WKF officials even within the constraints of Article 13.18. This is especially important when there are competing claims for national legitimacy by multiple karate organizations (as is the case of the USA where all it takes for an injunction against existence is a judge's order). For this reason it is very important for the WKF to respect and publicly acknowledge at all times the national jurisdiction of member federations.

In the 38-year history of the WKF only one other man appears to have used his position as Chief-Referee of the WKF to enhance his private karate organization, namely the late Teruo Hayashi of his Hayashi-ha Shito-ryu Karate organization. There was however an important difference. Hayashi had already established his international karate organization on a firm foothold before he became Chief-Referee of the WKF, whereas it is public knowledge that Tommy Morris and his KOI were "unknowns" in the karate world before he became Chief-Referee of the WKF in 1986. He was just another average "karate Joe". The explosive growth of KOI clearly coincides with Morris's rising role in the WKF refereeing system. This has lead many to conclude that it is a direct consequence of his position in the WKF. Furthermore, while Hayashi only accepted shito-ryu stylists or willing converts into his organization, KOI went further by becoming an "umbrella" organization accepting of organizations from any style of karate as long as the annual membership fee of about US\$400 was paid. It is known in the industry that umbrella groups grow much faster than strictly style-based organizations. The mix of this "umbrella" admissions policy after his strategic appointment as the WKF/EKF Chief-Referee was probably the formula for the rapid expansion of the KOI enterprise (1)*

Be this as it is, WKF Rules clearly require that all conflicts of interest be disclosed in writing to the EC. We do not know if there has been such a disclosure by Tommy Morris "many moons ago" when the issue first emerged, but what is "visible" is the tolerance shown for this serious conflict of interest by the leadership of the WKF. If there was timely disclosure, this should be made known to all members on the WKF website. This will not only promote the ruling on CIR but also discourage other such developments. This has clearly not been done and so the conflict of interest stands in the eyes of all members, especially those who feel victimized by it in one way or another.

The "KOI - efficient" axis of power within the WKF

It is generally felt among insiders that the current Chairman of the WKF Referees Commission Tommy Morris has held this powerful non-elective post for far too long, while concurrently being Chief-Referee of the EKF from 1984 to 2005 (when he resigned in favor of a protégé Tommasso Mini of Switzerland). It appears that KOI's phenomenal growth has clearly coincided with Tommy Morris's WKF refereeing authority and the emergence of a conflict of interest in apparent disregard and possible violation of WKF statutes. This situation has compromised the perception of the integrity of the organization and the refereeing system like no other issue.

This situation which is apparently widely perceived as improper is currently a major cause of silent discontent within the entire refereeing system, and further evidence of an erosion of proper democratic conduct in this IOC-member international sports federation. Many wonder as to why it is so difficult to establish a more democratic refereeing system? Under the previous system it was bad enough for democracy that power was concentrated in the hands of an EC-appointed Referees Council of three people (Tommy Morris-Scotland/EKF; R. Ortega-France/EKF and Julius Thiry-USA/PKF; to be replaced for a short period by Clement Soo of Malaysia) with Tommy Morris as the long time chairman. The precedent for such a concentration of power was actually a

Japanese legacy. In the early years of the Japanese hegemony of the WKF and up until the EKF/Tommy Morris “coup”, the JKF’s now deceased Teruo Hayashi controlled the Referees Council with such an “iron hand”, that he was referred to as the “bulldog”. Under the new EC-appointed Referees Commission of 15, it appears that Morris single-handedly runs the show after filling it with his own “men”. There cannot be any semblance of democracy within this highest policy-making body of the refereeing sector so long as the chairman is appointed (it is said that even the 8 peer-elected members of the “junior” EKF Referees Commission are essentially Morris protégées). More importantly being that this elected EKF-RC is subservient to the appointed WKF-RC, Morris’s 2005 resignation from the EKF-RC in no way suggests a loss of his power, (plus his protégée as Chairman of the EKF RC continues to be appointed by the EC). Some feel that there is here a clear appearance of double standards as far as democracy is concerned, in that what is considered good for the Europeans is apparently not yet good enough for the rest of the WKF world. Nevertheless peer-based elections for membership into an EKF-only Referees Commission is by past standards precedent-setting, and must be adopted at the WKF level sooner than later. The current practice of “experimenting” with an elected EKF-RC for use in a currently appointed WKF-RC someday does not make sense. Also, to make the Referees Commissions truly democratic institutions, it is imperative that the Chairman be also elected by his peers.

“Godfather KOI’s” blessings - a must for success in the WKF refereeing ranks?

Referees interviewed have alleged for some time now that it is clearly advantageous to join KOI to further their goals in the EKF-WKF referees program. This appears to have been facilitated by KOI’s easy “on-line” registration open to organizations of any karate style (their website clearly lists instructors from different styles of karate). It is probably no exaggeration to say that the special link with the WKF may have helped KOI blossom rapidly from humble beginnings as a single style organization (Shukokai Shito-ryu) based in Edinburgh (Scotland) into a giant multi-style international karate organization with affiliates in more than 40 countries. KOI may even be the envy of the once mighty JKA organization, and rather unique for being probably the only Western-led karate organization which even Japanese instructors and their organizations seek to join or be associated with (apparently those seeking special access to the refereeing system of the WKF). The extent of KOI’s influence is also reflected in the fact that some of KOI’s associates are prominent leaders in their own national federations.

Given the rather public showing of the extent of KOI’s influence and power among WKF members over many years, her influence and power cannot be denied nor “hidden” anymore. The “KOI factor” is clearly powered by the special link between Tommy Morris and the WKF and as stated elsewhere, the day this link is broken the KOI karate empire will fall like a house of cards. For this reason it is expected that Tommy Morris will defy all challenges to reign at the top of the WKF refereeing system way beyond his age and time.

KOI- Cup attendance coerced or the power of persuasion?

That KOI enjoys a unique connection with the WKF through Tommy Morris appears to be “flashed” directly and in more subtle ways to “encourage” participation in KOI tournaments (some feel that such persuasion is clearly implicit in Morris’s letter to WKF-member federations circulated before the 2005 Moscow KOI championships indicating that while he is resigning from the EKF he will continue as the WKF Chief-Referee). We have also been told by reliable sources inside that many referees have routinely received phone calls from KOI, “encouraging” attendance at KOI events, with students. Such overt solicitations of national referees and their students to attend what is essentially a private event can be construed as unethical conduct for the Chief-Referee of the WKF. For this reason the large attendances at KOI events may well be the consequence of powerful “persuasion” rather than a popular search for good competition (note that to be eligible to compete, an athlete must belong to a paid-up KOI-member organization, the fee for which was in 2005 around \$400 per annum). However it is only fair to report that all who have competed at the KOI Cups have returned satisfied with the level of competition experienced. In the final analysis it is left for the reader to judge if aggressive

solicitation of this kind constitutes proper behavior for the Chief-Referee of the WKF, and if there is here a clear conflict of interest situation that should have been investigated and prevented by the WKF leadership “yesterday”.

The fact is Tommy Morris has been very successful in “attracting” membership into his organization and thereby participation in his tournaments. As previously mentioned all of KOI’s annual World Cups (Dresden Germany-2002; Manila-2004; Moscow-2005 and Halkida-2006) have been well attended events that have “attracted” large numbers of competitors (1500 in Dresden) that will be the envy of all. However it is also quite “visible” that there has been a subtly but well cultivated over-lapping of interests between KOI and the WKF that some feel may even have been quite brazenly advertised on the KOI website (www.worldkarate.net). In any case the general perception appears to be that Morris’s position’s in the WKF has clearly benefited KOI. There is also widespread perception that WKF leadership in ignoring this conflict of interest of many years has not only shown tolerance for it but become part of the problem.

On a smaller scale the “disease” of profiting from positions has spread to even more “junior” members of the appointed WKF Referees Commission, whether this be localized lucrative invitations to conduct ever-changing rules clinics or the promotion of their private karate businesses. Such a “spreading of the wealth” from the top man keeps the system going. The fact remains that the “big names” in the refereeing system, are “no names” in the real athletic karate world because great coaches and great ex-athletes have little or no interest in wearing a suit and tie and refereeing.

Why the apparent tolerances shown for this clear conflict of interest?

The bigger question in every ones mind is why a conflict of interest so glaring and in full public view seems to have been tolerated by the WKF leadership for long? Why does it appear that Mr. Morris has been allowed to operate “with impunity” in his use of his WKF position to promote KOI, when current statutes clearly prohibit conflicts of interest (WKF Rules, Regulations & Commissions, section on ‘Conflict of Interest Regulation’-CIR is provided in Appendix)? Why have rules if they are not implemented? The apparent tolerance shown for this conflict of interest by the current WKF leadership promises to erode into the ethical foundations of this young IOC member organization even more than it already has. It now appears that only a Morris resignation from his WKF post will address the problem, as the WKF leadership has chosen to remain silent on the issue. What is in question here is the integrity of leadership for turning a blind eye to probably the clearest case of a conflict of interest in the history of the WKF. As alluded to earlier, many insiders wonder if the tolerance shown is not a “pay-back” to KOI by the WKF leadership for promoting their partisan political agendas among member federations, using the refereeing system and KOI’s world-wide network to punish recalcitrant national federations. If there is any truth in this we may have an explanation for the EC’s conspicuous tolerance for a most well kept “secret”. A serious consequence of this perceived tolerance is the perceived “writing on the wall” that it may pay to patronize KOI to advance in refereeing ranks. This may also be a plausible explanation for KOI’s phenomenal expansion in more than 40 countries, many with the “blessings” of the national federations? One such “connection” with Malaysia merits elaboration.

The Malaysian connection?

For a time between 1994 and the early years of the new millennium there was some gossip about the “KOI-Malaysian connection”. Special relations between the Malaysian Karate Federation (MAKAF) and the WKF refereeing elite goes back to earlier years of the existence of the Referees Council of 3 (Council members Ortega and Morris were apparently frequent guests of MAKAF whose Secretary General Clement Soo was for a brief period an appointed member of this exclusive club until removed at the behest of two powerful leaders of the Asian Karate EC, Taiwan’s Chang and recently deceased Macao’s Achiam (apparently a kind of “clipping of the wings” rite for “flying too high too fast”). Even though Soo has since joined the KOI “family” for protection from further free-fall, this does not appear to have helped him regain his former

refereeing stature. It appears that Tommy Morris was unwilling to antagonize the two Asian veterans of the WKF-EC Chang and Achiam because of their special “links” to Espinos. Also Soo soon lost out to a fellow Malaysian rival and KOI protégée Loh Beng Hooi in refereeing seniority. The phenomenal rise of this relative newcomer Loh Beng Hooi to the WKF refereeing seniority continues to be the subject of much negative gossip and discontent among veteran senior-referees, who attributed this rise to nothing but his close KOI connections.

While this special connection appears to have laid low for many years the new rules for 2009 appears to have “re-activated” it. MAKAF is all set to start receiving Tommy Morris for yet another round of seminars. As always new rules appears to always coincide with a fuller schedule of travels for the Chief-referee of the WKF.

The WKF Referees Commission, “KOI Boys”?

The common ridicule is that the WKF Referees Commission is stacked with KOI “clones” from the many KOI stronghold countries. It seems that most of the 11 members of the Referees Commission are essentially pro-KOI-Morris “rookies” who were chosen for their allegiance over an abundance of available qualified veterans, especially from within the EKF orbit. A consequence of this practice is the absence of senior referees from some very WKF-karate active countries like the USA, Iran and Turkey. The American absence is very glaring and probably a carry-over of past rivalry between USANKF President Julius Thiry and Morris, when both were members of the Referees Council of 3.

All this begs the question as to why would “rookies” be appointed to senior positions of authority in any organization such as the WKF Referees Commission (RC)? When veterans become rivals and pose a perceived threat, this is the usual response of incumbent leadership. This appears to be the case within the WKF-RC where one group was replaced by another more amenable to management. Gossip has it that this is akin to an advance “mine-sweeping” operation aimed at protecting terrain from potential “invaders”. At the EKF level the Morris strategy was able to successfully engineer-out rivals Ortega and Zaccaro by introducing a carefully thought out election tactic introduced at the 2004 Moscow EKF Seniors, that made it all appear very democratic. However with time this precedent however politically calculating when first introduced proved to be liberating (as seen in the case of Zaccaro who was elected into the RC of the EKF most recently at the 43rd EKF seniors of 2008). As for Rafael Ortega the once powerful member of the “troika”, he has failed to be elected into the EKF-RC (probably a rejection of his well known unpopular conduct of the past) and is meanwhile being tolerated in a WKF-RC completely dominated by Chairman Morris and his appointees. At the WKF level where it matters there is pessimism as to whether a similar partially democratic model (only when the Chairman is elected by his peers will full democracy be established in the RC’s) will emerge soon from a Referees Commission clearly controlled by Tommy Morris and appointed by a partisan EC.

KOI - a parallel international karate organization?

It is safe to conclude that the phenomenal growth of the KOI organization since inception in 1991 is principally the consequence of Tommy Morris’s pivotal role as Chief-Referee of the WKF. Call it tolerance or collusion this special link appears to have coincided with KOI’s world-wide expansion success. It is also widely believed that the KOI karate empire will disintegrate rapidly when Morris is no longer the Chief-Referee of the WKF (unless as some inaccurately suggest he steps up to becoming the President of WKF). It is unlikely that he has higher ambitions if his status quo is maintained. Many insiders jokingly attribute this to the “notoriety” of Scotsmen preferring “money”, while Latin “machomen” will settle for status and power anytime. So in a sense the current situation of “power-sharing” works out well, as long as Espinos can count on Morris’s leadership of the Referees Commission and KOI to promote his political agenda among national federations when the road gets rough.

Referees feeling pressured?

If we could compile a secret list of referees from national federations who feel pressured to join the KOI "social club" to advance their refereeing ambitions this will probably be long and alarming. Even well respected veteran referees feel "persuaded" to play this game at great personal inconvenience and financial sacrifice. Then there are those who clearly benefited from "fast-track" KOI connections; names like Loh Beng Hooi (Malaysia; who is a listed KOI instructor); Xavier Mantilla of Venezuela and a whole host of newcomers like Weigert (Germany), Dia (Senegal), Puveland (France), Mohei (Egypt) and recently Helena Koch (Mexico). It is no secret or coincidence that newcomers with KOI ties make up the vast majority of the membership of the elected EKF Referees Commission and the appointed WKF Referees Commission. This makes it appear as if to advance in the refereeing sector one must cultivate KOI connections. It is little wonder that at the 15th KOI-Cup in Halkida (Greece-2006) the panel of referees was composed entirely of members of the EKF and WKF Referees Commission, who came there at their own expense. More recently some have felt pressured to even attend KOI events of lesser importance at the national level, such as the Latina Games (now named KOI-Italian Open). Under these circumstances the perception of easier refereeing-advancements with KOI patronage may well explain the special attraction for KOI events. The unsettling situation concerning the special KOI-WKF connection is the subject of rampant gossip and discontent within WKF circles because this clear case of a conflict of interest appears to have generated many real problems. For example we cannot ignore the complaints of poorer federations and member clubs unable to afford the expenses involved in joining the KOI social club to become the "in crowd" of the WKF refereeing system.

Time to unionize & form a Referees Union

The way out of this predicament for referees who feel aggrieved is to form a Referees Union, demand a full seat in the EC and then deal with the WKF leadership to negotiate proper working conditions and certification process, including rates of payment and shorter length of time to complete the entire process, not the 9 years that it now takes. The discriminatory practice of elections for the EKF Referees Commission but not for the WKF and the rest of the world must be brought before CAS without delay. Elections must be held at all levels and for all posts in the Referees Commission including that of the Chairman. In addition the entire issue of a conflict of interest between the two positions held by Tommy Morris as owner of KOI and the Chairman of the Referees Commission must be brought before CAS/TAS. We cannot imagine CAS rendering a judgment in favor of WKF on these matters. It is this way out or sufferance in silence indefinitely.

Elections finally, but only for the EKF Referees Commission- Selective Democracy

As mentioned earlier, for the first time in the history of the WKF a peer-elected Referees Commission was established at the 2004 EKF Seniors albeit just for this continental body. This Commission was composed of 8 members elected by a rather complex system of votes per country, based on the number of qualified referees (R) and judges (J) present at the tournament (for example; 1-3 RJs = 1 vote; 4-8 = 2 votes, and 9 or more= 3 votes). While both "A" and "B" level R-Js present can vote, only "A" level R-Js can submit their names for elections. The term of office is for 4 years, and only half the RC is up for elections at any one time, thus ensuring continuity.

What is immediately clear is that this system of elections favors the "big karate countries" with large delegations of R and Js. By passing the right candidates, it also allows for the EC-appointed Chairman and his RC to regulate the number of future R-Js a country can have and thus influence candidacy eligibility and voting strength at future elections (ensuring loyalty to partisan agendas and the continued control of the refereeing system). Additionally while it is great that we now have an elected RC albeit at the EKF level, it is unacceptable that the all powerful Chairman

continues to be appointed by the EKF management (EC). Any elected system that has an appointed chairman must be viewed with suspicion. This long overdue “half-hearted” start at best has not been implemented at the highest WKF level of refereeing. Why is this? Most people feel that this is a tactic to pacify grassroots discontent in Europe by introducing elections where it will not matter, but not having it at the highest level where it will. Meanwhile some have also seen it proper to release a timely rumor that elections to the RC is being experimented with in the EKF for “eventual” adoption in the WKF sometime in the distant future. We are now 4 years into this “experiment” but there is still no news of democracy for the WKF Referees Commission on the horizon. Unless there is concerted pressure this will never happen.

Nevertheless, the establishment of the EKF Referees Commission in 2004 was a historical event, as it was the first time ever that members to a Referees Commission were elected by their peers. With apparently the backing of a captive majority of eligible referees (groomed by Morris through the complex certification system) many feel that the victory of the Morris platform of candidates was a foregone conclusion, as was the defeat of rivals Zaccaro of Italy and Ortega of France when this system was first introduced in 2004. It should be noted that the Chairman of the EKF-Referees Commission continues to be appointed and his influence over the refereeing sector immense. As Chief-Referee and examiner he can ultimately determine the number of qualified R/Js a country will have and thus influence the outcome of RC elections. When Morris resigned from his EKF chairmanship in 2005, a longtime protégée Tommaso Mini of Switzerland was hand-picked as his replacement. In any case Morris’s power over the EKF-RC will continue unchanged as long he remains Chairman of the WKF-RC. Statutory age limits that existed (68) have also been altered for Tommy Morris and extensions provided as ‘Transitional Dispositions’ in the Revised Statutes of 2006.

The entire change from a Referees-Council of 3 to an enlarged Referees Commission appears to have met little or no resistance. Some say that this may have had something to do with the general dislike for ex-Referees Council member Rafael Ortega of France, for supposedly his longstanding arrogant disposition and conduct towards junior referees, particularly during fellow countryman Delcourt’s leadership of the WKF.

In any case the resignation of Morris and the appointment of Mini at the EKF level will not affect the powers of Tommy Morris and KOI’s influence in the WKF refereeing realm. There are those who feel that this message appears to have been subtly but surely conveyed in Morris’s timely letter to potential WKF participants just prior to the 14th KOI World Cup of Moscow (letter dated 4/7/05 is in our possession), in which he says; “as for the WKF I have been asked to stay on until the World Championships in Japan in 2008 **at least**, and I have agreed to do that....there is still a lot of work to be done”. Some saw in this letter a latent message intended to remind everybody that he will be around even after his resignation from the EKF referees Commission.

Why does the WKF Referees Commission continue to be an appointed body?

It is interesting to say the least that the electoral democracy introduced in the EKF-RC has not yet reached the WKF refereeing system. Is the EKF more deserving of a democratic system than the rest of the WKF world? Why is this valuable experiment with democracy not being tried out in the other continental federations within the WKF and in full-force (by electing the Chairman as well)? Is it not better to have a weak democratic system than an efficient autocratic one? Why does this even have to be an experiment in one place and not the real thing in every place? What can go wrong except that we will have a more just system protected by peers and not political participants from above? At the WKF level all 11 members as per Article 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 of the WKF Rules, Regulations & Commissions (including the 4 Supplementary Members with voting rights) of the RC created in 2004 are Tommy Morris appointees. Rumor has it that the enlarged Referees Commission concept was initially essentially a Morris strategy designed to relegate the powers of rival Ortega in the then Referees Council of 3. With the exception of R. Ortega (France), Tommy Morris revamped the entire composition of the Referees Commission of the WKF in his favor, even if this meant bringing in “unknowns” like Azzaoui (Morocco); Christou

(Greece); Mohei (Egypt); Yamamura (Japan); Pham Quoc Trinh (Vietnam); Meissa Dia (Senegal); Wolfgang Weigert (Germany) and Helena Koch (Mexico). Others like Mantilla (Venezuela) and Lim Beng Hooi (Malaysia) were no legitimate veterans either but well known KOI die-hards, while yet others like Con Cassis of Australia appear to be reluctant associates who have learnt to play the game. In any case new faces to ensure renewed loyalty is not a new strategy in the politics of organizations.

I think most people in the WKF are quite clear as to why the peer elected system practiced in the EKF will not be introduced into the WKF-RC during Tommy Morris's tenure. The introduction of a bona fide democratic system of peer-based elections (including the chairmanship) will surely signal his demise and that of KOI rather rapidly. The 2008 "return" of Zaccaro into the EKF-RC through elections is a small but significant sign that those who have tasted the power of the vote in a democratic system cannot be manipulated forever. However we can expect that the RC of the WKF will remain an appointed body for as long as Tommy Morris has the support of the WKF leadership and as long as this is continued there will be no full or true democracy practiced in the refereeing sector.

In addition to the members of RCs, we are sure that many senior referees at the EKF/WKF level such as JS (Holland), DD and PD must (Balkans) feel pressured to assist in KOI's activities at great personal inconvenience and expense. It is also highly probable that the list of those who feel compelled to attend KOI tournaments to safeguard their refereeing ambitions and favored treatment for their national federations must be a lot longer, given the long queue of juniors observed paying their respects to the "chief". The fact is the vast majority of referees are honest folks who probably feel compelled by the KOI-WKF real-politik to spend time and money attending KOI events. If true this is an additional burden exerted by a private organization with perceived special ties to the WKF leadership. By their inaction it appears that the WKF leadership has chosen to collude rather than protect the aspirations of junior referees. When respectable and proven senior referees feel compelled to attend KOI events to protect their ranks something has to be very wrong with such a system.

So once again there appears to be a clear link between the radical rise of KOI and the owner's official position in the WKF. No one can be blamed for inferring from this that KOI did benefit from this link in her world-wide expansion plans and that it clearly appears to be a lot more than mere coincidence. Many view the link as an undeclared conflict of interest with troubling consequences, some of which will now be reviewed.

Perceptions do damage Right or Might

The most serious of allegations actually emerges from the competition scene of the EKF, as most of the time Europeans contend for medals against each other at premier WKF senior and junior/cadet events. It is alleged that referees who advance "prematurely" because of their connections may have felt pressured in high-value matches, without any of their "buttons" having to be publicly pushed. What was shared with us on this issue may well be the worst case scenario, but one that while unimaginable is often "joked" about among veteran referees "benched" from center stage for political reasons. They seemed to know precisely which referees were "vulnerable" to a kind of auto-imposed pressure to influence matches in certain directions (so called "one handed referees"). In their view the outcome of crucial matches may be pre-determined through the selection of referees from a "friendly pool". Apparently all this is done in silence, with "no notes or words" being exchanged. These voices also contend that as a part of this "mix", respected veteran referees are often "benched" when it comes to officiating close matches between European powerhouses of karate and replaced by mediocre talent from the "friendly" pool (names have been named). This highly sensitive commentary has been shared with us on multiple occasions at WKF/EKF tournaments, in addition to being brought to our attention in our frequent travels to the new Balkan nations. We find such gossip often difficult to believe much less accept, but it is nevertheless the troubling consequence of the existence of "favoritism" in the refereeing system and the negative perceptions that this has fostered. Like most rumors, they eventually

acquire a life of their own and become difficult to quell, especially when the alienated authors of these claims can easily attach themselves to the many other frustrations that exist within the WKF movement of karate.

Negative perceptions within a “wounded” WKF (now that we have been removed from Olympic inclusion beyond 2016 and are in the company of ridiculous “sports” within ARISF) can only be removed through the initiative of the leadership of the organization by democratically preparing the entire refereeing system for full elections by peers for membership into the Referees Commission. The disregard for the KOI-WKF “cultivated” overlap of interests by the Espinos leadership is probably being construed as collusion based on some political deal between Espinos and Morris. The decision by the EC to ignore this troubling development affecting internal morale can easily play into the hands of those in the IOC who are probably already privy to rumors of undemocratic practices within the WKF. Let us never forget that today there are alternative international organizations such as the WKC/WUKF that are gaining momentum and strength due to easier access to membership and alienation within the WKF. As mentioned earlier, unlike the WKF where only a single bona fide federation is eligible for membership, these others in accepting all associations will grow a lot faster and also provide a rare opportunity for the majority of athletes who fail to get into the national team headed for WKF events, to enjoy some level of international competition. The fact is it has to be disturbing to the general membership that an un-elected Chief-Referee (Chairman of the Referees Commission) wields such authority within the WKF, and that he appears to be flaunting it without any fear of repercussions.

The raising of the WKF-KOI conflict of interest issue is in no way a denial of the good work Tommy Morris has obviously done over the years as Chief-Referee, especially under the old “troika” system of a Referees Council of 3. There is a certain reluctant acknowledgment of this even with all the doubts generated by the current WKF-KOI link. The good work however cannot justify any direct or indirect use of an official position to benefit private interests. The WKF-KOI connection has probably affected the credibility of the entire refereeing system like nothing else before. The extent of the “damage” may depend on how many referees-judges of all levels are directly or indirectly connected and “indebted” to KOI.* (2). The compilation of such a “tainted”-list while unimaginable may prove useful to stop such developments in the future, and should be easy enough to compile just based on available records.

Constant rule changes for profit?

Another major complaint that one hears often of the Morris-era refereeing system is that it was under “his watch” and initiative that a simple effective refereeing system of the past was converted into a 9-year ordeal for no logical reason (but one which has brought considerable financial gains for the WKF). It has also ushered-in greater political controls over referees. The standing inside joke is that it now takes less time to work for a traditional Ph.D. degree from a bona fide university (not to be confused with whatever is conferred by the “.com diploma mills” of dubious on-line education that has become popular in WKF and other karate circles) than to become a senior WKF referee. This was not always so. It is not easy to understand or accept the fact that it now takes 9 years to be certified a senior referee when in the past this took half the time. Furthermore it is completely incomprehensible why there is now a minimum age requirement of 30 years for candidates (Tommy Morris, the author of the now lengthier and universally disliked process must be thankful that such barriers did not exist when he was “climbing the ranks”) and that even after attaining the highest possible grade, this is only valid for 2 years even when in active status (while exempt from the practicum for 4 years, the theory part must be passed every 2 years-see Article 24.3 of WKF Rules, regulations & Commissions)? What was essentially a simpler and extremely efficient refereeing-certification system of the past has now been elevated to “rocket science” by Tommy Morris et al. It appears that the bottom line is that the referees will never be free of their controls and be forever paying certification fees. The generation of money for all those involved in the process was probably the real reason for the replacement of the simple and effective system of the past.

For the “veterans” who struggled through this experience it is troubling to justify the replacement of a proven “old” system for a rather cumbersome and “expensive” new one. For them this change probably defies common logic as karate is a sport that needs a plentiful supply of good referees. Therefore it is rather perplexing that instead of providing incentives to solve the supply problem, the WKF appears to be discouraging demand by “squeezing” every penny they can get out of candidates, who also end up working for free. The standing joke is for non-KOI “outsiders” to be failed for a lack of “Zanshin” in the practicum of exams by some not qualified enough to look for what is essentially a requirement for kata not refereeing (referees merely need to be able to recognize “zanshin” in competing athletes). The learning never ends because the rules keep being changed unnecessarily and without input from athletes and coaches. I am sure there are very few sports where you have to spend large sums of money to be certified over 9 years only to end up working for these same examiners for free. This system defies common sense or logic.

Even before the “ink has dried” on previous rule changes, new ones are already in store for 2009. Rules of competition and weight categories for kumite are being changed radically (such as the omission of the unique and prestigious “OPEN” weight division), without any meaningful input from athletes who are will be the most affected by this new round of changes. Once again athletes have been ignored at a time when the IOC is engaged in just the opposite, an empowerment of the long ignored Athletes Commission. It is important to note that while there will be new rule changes, it is not the “stuff of rocket science” and therefore can very easily be incorporated into current knowledge by individuals already certified. There is no need for the Chief-Referee of the WKF or more junior “copy-cats” to attend to this personally, with new formal rounds of required expensive “continuing education” seminars conducted by him all over the WKF world.

The bottom line is that the replacement of a simple effective system by a long, complex and expensive one (for referees who have to go through the grind) could only have been done by a magician with strange motives, none of which was in the interest of serving athletes. It is no secret that Tommy Morris has done very well for himself economically thanks to a blatant conflict of interest ignored by President Espinos and the WKF-EC. The fact that this emasculation of a proven simple system is tolerated by the WKF leadership says a lot about them that is less than complimentary. Ask any veteran WKF referee in private about the constant rule changes and they will all describe it in unequivocal terms as the “Morris Mess”. Now that we are definitely “out” of the Olympics for a long time to come, that age-old excuse used to justify partisan actions and constant changes; “getting ready for the Olympics” is no longer a valid gimmick.

Statutory retirement for Morris not until at least 2010

While the 2006 WKF Statutes mandate resignation for Commission members at age 65, an “escape clause” in ‘Transitional Dispositions’ gives them an automatic 4-year extension (see appendix). Tommy Morris who I believe is 69 can therefore continue being the “head honcho” until 2010, and even beyond with yet another “simple” change in the statutes. There is every reason to believe that he will continue to at least 2010 for there is too much at stake for KOI. The general consensus is that KOI will fall like a “house of cards” soon after he steps out or is moved out.

At the 2005 Tenerife EKF Senior championships Tommy Morris resigned as the EKF Chief-Referee (citing work-load and travels), as per his “famous letter of 4/7/05” reminding all of the upcoming Moscow KOI Cup. In the same letter he did give the impression that he was “begged” to remain as the WKF Chief-Referee, “at least up to the 2008 WKF seniors in Tokyo, because there is still a lot of work to be done” (we hope that further complicating and lengthening the rules of competition and refereeing process to generate funds is not one of them). This resignation in no way signifies a loss of power, for as long as he controls the WKF-RC he controls all RCs within the WKF orbit. Given what KOI will stand to lose, it is expected that Tommy Morris will continue in this position indefinitely until a ripe old age. The facts surrounding the “coincidence”

appear to speak for themselves, which is that KOI's fortunes began to expand radically when the former EC-appointed Referees Council of 3 "equals" was replaced by the current Referees Commission of 15, under the appointed leadership of Chairman Tommy Morris. This change from a small Referees Council of 3 equals to a larger Referees Commission of 15 may appear progressive and democratic at first glance, but closer examination will reveal that all power is now concentrated in the hands of a single EC-appointed Chairman who picks the names for the EC to appoint into the RC.

There appears to be widespread discontent in the refereeing system based on the perception that patronization of KOI may have become the requirement for advancing in the WKF refereeing system or else face the "lack of Zanshin" excuse or something equally ridiculous, for failure in the practical part of required exams. Although largely based on circumstantial evidence, there is enough here for "conviction by a jury of peers" in any Western democratic court system. By not addressing the troublesome issue squarely the WKF leadership is perceived to be in complicity with the author of the problem. Meanwhile one thing is sure, the WKF link has been very good to KOI and that the day Morris steps down or is forced out, the KOI world-wide organization will fall fast like a house of cards.

The only "head" of 2 WKF Commissions - Referees Commission & Sports Commission (?)

Tommy Morris is not only the "Chief-Referee" but also Director of a vague Sports Commission. No one knows of the exact functions of this second Chairmanship post of Tommy Morris (we know that he was not elected), but it does not come with EC membership and voting rights here. All we know is that until his recent "resignation" from the Referees Commission he was the only one in the WKF who was Chairman of 2 Commissions. Maanon/Argentina; Diaz/Venezuela; Peakall/Australia and Arriaza/Spain are all members of multiple Commissions (what is odd is having men serving as members of the Womens Sports Commission, which appears to have replaced the existing Gender Commission). As Sports Director he was a member of the select WKF delegation that was invited to testify before the IOC Programme Commission in November 2008 and the IOC Executive Board recently in June 2009 on behalf of karate becoming an Olympic sport at the October 2009 IOC Session in Copenhagen.

Is this really "BANZAI" at last as Tommy Morris is replaced after 24 years as Chief-Referee of the WKF or a convenient arrangement for the powers that be?

Tommy is finally "out" as Chief-referee after 24 years (gets to keep his other non EC post as Chairman of the vague Sports Commission for now) , but the WKF refereeing system is not free from the politics of selection rather than election of this position. You can be sure that the vast majority of senior referees were not consulted on this change or replacement by a relatively "junior" referee Con Kassis of Australia. We can only breathe a sigh of relief when the Chairman of the Referees Commission is elected by his peers or by the Congress of the WKF or both (such as all referees above a certain level should vote to recommend a name for election by the Congress). The EC selecting one name to replace another does not undo the damage done to the system during all these years, resulting from the constant rule changes for profit and the unnecessary lengthening of time to go from the bottom rank to the top. Only time will tell if this change for a new man in little known Con Cassis of Australia is a sincere new beginning or a mere cosmetic political arrangement to appease the angry ones and Tommy Morris. Why is Tommy Morris being kept in the Sports Commission past the 65-year age limit? Not even the shadow of Tommy Morris must ever again be allowed to influence WKF politics and refereeing (there are those who suspect that he desperately wants to lurk in the background as a visible shadow-advisor to Espinos to protect the interests of KOI). No one man must ever again be allowed to remain the Chief-Referee for such a long time with total immunity to do as he pleases as was the case with Tommy Morris. Above all the potential for a conflict of interest a la Tommy Morris must strictly be avoided by constant vigilance against Con Kassis building his own empire a la KOI and becoming the next "millionaire-referee". The stars appear to be shining on the

Kassis brothers from Australia, with Con as the newly unelected Chief Referee of the WKF and brother Michael the President of the Australian Karate Federation.

A return to the original simple, fast and effective “mirror system” of refereeing and increase in number of athletes per country per weight division.

The refereeing system must again be simplified to what it was in the past (the simple initial “mirror” system) and strict term-limits placed on elected not selected members of the Referees Commission (all members must be elected without exception). Another issue that must be addressed is the recognition and rewarding of the superior depth of kumite standards in some countries as against others by increasing the number of athletes a country can submit per weight division (was 2 in the past but only 1 now). At least 3 per country must be permitted to encourage the possibility of a “clean sweep” of medals by countries that have the depth to do it, even if this means replacing the current lengthy repechage system with a time saving single or double knockout system. The current single entry system penalizes countries with greater depth in kumite excellence.

The Didier Damnation that the “Feudal system of Arbitrage” must go.

It should also be disclosed that intense anger was starting to erupt into public “rebuke” of Espinos’ leadership from “within” for the very first time, triggered by the failure to become an Olympic sport at the IOC Executive Board meetings of August 2009. One man in particular French President Francis Didier confronted Espinos with the immediate need for change in the leadership of the Referees Commission (see Didier’s interview in Karate Bushido of Nov.2009, page 42 “Casser Le Systeme Feodal de l’Arbitrage”). Only courageous confrontations like this will work in difficult times and we hope that more leaders will publicly stand up to Espinos for failing to manage and lead the WKF properly as evidenced by his “unconditional” support of Tommy Morris since 1998 and the poor one-man campaign he waged in our Olympic quest that was doomed to fail.

“One referee per country” policy a la Mediterranean Games

At some point in the future a “one referee per country” or a certain number per continental region-policy should be adopted by the WKF to prevent possible biases in decisions through “overloads”. Currently this is of concern to poorer member countries with lesser representation because their members cannot afford the expense of a 9-year wait for advanced refereeing status that involves spending a lot of money attending WKF and KOI events. A country-referee equitable ratio is also in keeping with the IOC policy which was adopted and used at the karate event of the Mediterranean Games of 2001 in Tunisia. Such a system must be devised and implemented within the WKF system sooner than later. There has apparently been some discussion of this issue by the WKF management, albeit in very rudimentary terms, but it appears to have gone nowhere. We hope that the prior approval of national federations will be sought through the Congress of the WKF in the final selection of that single referee who will represent that country-continental region. A “one referee per country policy” will definitely reduce the prevailing perception of a pro-Europe bias, as the vast majority of referees come from countries of this continent.

Wow! Suit and Tie - Need for a “dress down” policy

It is our firm belief that referees serve to conduct matches properly between athletes according to the rules and are not there to impose their personalities or judgments on athletes. Instead there currently exists within the WKF refereeing system a pretentiousness bordering on arrogance that emanates from the rigid status based karate-heritage inherited from Japan. The “master” mentality is inappropriately carried into the ring by referees. As an arbiter of matches and interpreter of rules of competition, he is a simple technician there merely to ensure a fair and safe fight as in other IOC sports, all the while remaining as “silent and invisible” as possible during a

match. It appears that in the WKF we have “dressed up” and elevated mere arbiters to special elite status over the welfare of athletes. Karate referees in “suit and ties” appear completely out of place to conduct a fight. Even the World Taekwondo Federation (WTF) has replaced their unappealing “bloody yellow” attire of the past with simpler colors, and unlike the WKF, WTF referees do not wear jackets when refereeing.

“Put a uniform on them and they will kill for you” goes a saying, especially on the weaker segments of society. South American military dictators understood this well and used them to enlist the loyalty of economically and socially marginalized groups in their own populations. The poor were thus enlisted to do their dirty job for them (the Mesquite Indians of Nicaragua and the Mon-Khmer hill tribes of Indo-China in the Vietnam War were classic examples of this in recent times). Uniforms are often used to create a special identity and divisions. Such an alienating division currently exists in the WKF between referees in suit and ties and athletes in simple kimonos. It appears that someone knew what they were doing when they required a suit and tie of referees.

It is commonly known that the vast majority of those who excitedly seek to become referees are failed athletes or coaches. The evidence for this is the fact that not a single elite retired WKF fighter has turned to refereeing. This is especially the case in sports where there is little or no financial remuneration for such services, as is the case in WKF karate. Why else would someone spend close to 9 long years to become an “A” level referee? The ego of controlling a match and therefore being on stage in “suit and tie” is a temptation some people just cannot resist, especially the “control freaks”. This is especially so in Third World countries where the man with the “suit and tie” stands above the rest and karate provides a rare avenue for this opportunity among the less educated and economically challenged. Therefore I am convinced that it is a special personality-type that tends to be attracted to what is essentially a thankless and payless “job” (in fact our referees have to “pay” to serve). The vast majority of retired athletes especially elite ones, become coaches not referees. Karate is a rare contact sport where referees are inappropriately attired in “suit and tie” (some push this further by walking around with a brief-case just “to hold a whistle”) to conduct essentially physically taxing duties. Such anachronistic and uncomfortable attire merely tends to engender a misplaced sense of elitism vis-à-vis athletes. This must change and our referees should look more like their counterparts in other sports, attired casually and principally there to serve the athletes by ensuring a safe and fair match.

There is nothing worse in matches for athletes and the audience than to watch arrogant showmen/women referees forgetting their place and trying to “steal the show” from deserving athletes through comical showmanship (thank god they are a small group and mainly seen at the local level, but even this is too much to bear). Such referees must remember that the best arbiter is an “invisible” one who stays in the background during a match. Unfortunately when the rules were changed from the very democratic and effective “mirror system” (where the center referee was required to seek a majority with the other 2 persons that composed the mirror system) to the current system where the center referee “calls the shots”, the door was opened for egotistical personalities to vent themselves rather than arbitrate quietly. This unfortunate change also increased the number of judgment calls in matches and therefore errors. The original “mirror system” that worked so well (coaches were then allowed a valid protest role unlike now) was abandoned in favor of the current one for apparently better television camera-coverage. This is yet another example, albeit a “small one” of putting the interests of athletes aside.

Speak with elite athletes and coaches and you will probably find them in agreement on the contention by many that the most important quality in a referee they look for is his talent for recognizing good techniques and making quick good calls. With this as the foundation knowledge and proper interpretation of rules almost always falls into place very naturally. So, all the excessive hype about the rules as well as the consequent lengthening and complication of it into a 9-year ordeal was unnecessary and clearly done for other reasons. It has only served to increase the coffers of the WKF and anyone else connected with it.

Refereeing in karate leaves much to be desired even when left in the best of hands because of the nature of a kumite match. A karate match is "short" (2-3 minutes) and full of "fast and furious" action. Tired referees can and do easily make mistakes while biased ones can just as easily hide theirs (probably more so than in most other Olympic contact sports). It is a shame that easily available instant-replay camera-technology goes unused to prevent poor judgment-calls against athletes who sacrifice a lot in time and money to perform well in tournaments. When mistakes can be drastically reduced through majority calls and the use of technology, why leave everything in a match in the hands of a "supreme" center referee? The current practice allows the ego of the all powerful central referee from an elitist karate tradition to take precedence over fairness to athletes. The ridiculous attire of our referees can only perpetuate elitist sentiments already inherent in our tradition. Only one national body the Croatian Karate Federation is actively experimenting with the use of video-technology in their elite tournaments, where the deposit of 100 euros is refunded if the protest is upheld. They are planning to radically and creatively go further eventually by making referees pay for their mistakes.

The Technical Commission - what a waste

Ever since inception this EC-appointed body has been a "dead" Commission with little or no contribution to speak of. Members have for the most part been political appointees instead of karatekas with technical qualifications such as a former winning coach or athlete. It is our contention that higher pre-requisites be established for membership into what should be a "prestigious" Commission. With a wealth of available great names of ex-fighters and coaches like Vic Charles, Josepa, Cherdieu, Van Mourik, Molly Samuels, Egea, Claudio Guazzaroni, Dusan Dacic, Dagfelt, Toni Dietl, Malave, Masci, Petinella, Wayne Otto among others, the EC has instead chosen to consistently fill this commission with political appointees of questionable value as a source of technical expertise in modern karate matters. These "couch potatoes" of the karate world must be replaced with the able and willing karate greats of the recent past, like those mentioned above.

The leadership of this Commission must also have proper scholarly skills to generate useful reports based on research into the many issues of concern to athletes and members at large. There are some "big and small" questions looming over the WKF that need answers. Allow me to cite a few examples. Why should a take-down (ashibarai) + punch technique be extremely narrowly time bound, rather than based on the proper execution and completion of the technique, especially when the grounded "victim" is allowed to kick at will? Is the reasoning and logic behind awarding more points to one technique over another based on strength, speed or that it is more difficult to execute? We dare you to tell us that a fully executed and well timed gyaku-zuki to the face is not as forceful as a kick, and deserving of equal points? Why is grabbing now being severely admonished when this is a most natural action in free-fighting as long as it is not abused? Are we going to end up like "boring" taekwondo where face punches and sweeps are disallowed? The list of questions can go on, but the mandate of this Commission should not be limited to technical issues concerning kata/kumite but also related matters like superior coaching techniques and use of proper training equipment as well. In fact the Commission should also be entrusted with matters of social concern such as the proper recording of WUKO-WKF history and gender equity issues such as the disproportionate representation of women within the WKF organization, or even specialized research on junior/women's training regimen. Here we must say that the brief-vague history of the WKF found on the website (www.wkf.net) is to say the least an embarrassment and clearly the effort of one man to place himself on the center-stage of WUKO-WKF history. I am surprised that the quickie ".com doktors" in the organization have not put their heads together to write a proper history of the WKF, instead of the karate world being treated to a confusing and embarrassing "mumbo-jumbo" concoction. With the formal adoption of the new rules of kumite at WKF-15 in Munich (2000), it is even more imperative that the Technical Committee be properly constituted as the principal source of answers to technical matters dealing with history, ethics, techniques, training equipment, rules, gender and other relevant issues. To the best of our knowledge this Technical Commission has never produced a single "technical" or social document, and therefore has clearly failed to live up to a more honorable potential.

“Gender - democratization” of the “Boys Club” as per IOC policy

One of the important areas identified for cooperation between the UN and the IOC at the January 2008 joint meeting of the two leaders Ban Ki-Moon and Jacques Rogge in Lausanne was “promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women”. (see IOC Newsletter #203 for 21/01/08 to 25/01/08). The joint statement may well have been a silent admonition of the failure of the IOC and her member federations to address this lingering problem seriously. This feeling was echoed in even stronger terms at the March 2008 4th IOC Conference on ‘Women and Sports’ where the principal recommendation was that the IOC mandates that NOCs must have women in all policy making bodies, such as the Executive Committee (see IOC Newsletter #210 of 3/14/2008 for details).

The WKF is struggling to comply with IOC regulations regarding proper gender representation at all levels of the organization. In this they have clearly failed, as a casual analysis of the gender composition of the entire WKF organization shows that women make up less than 10% of the total elected and appointed posts. In the powerful EC there are only 3 women out of a total of 24 members (only in 2007 was the third female, yet another unknown from Fiji Makarita Lenoa was brought in from the Oceania continental federation). In addition there was Norma Foster an ex-member of the Referees Commission (RC) and current chairman of the Gender Commission who was quietly replaced from the RC in 2006 while another unknown Helena Koch (Mexico) was equally quietly brought in. We also note another “quiet” entry into the Gender Commission is former veteran EC member James Johnson of Canada. It is a shame that his talents cannot be used in a more important elected capacity in the EC, but his known “weak” home support in Canada probably makes him expendable. There are no other women in positions that matter and so these powerful bodies continue to remain essentially a “boys club”. It is clear that the WKF leadership has failed to bring karate-qualified women into their fold since the very beginning in 1970 even though the President has the authority to appoint persons to satisfy gender and geographical equity. This authority can be put to good use or abused as yet another avenue to appoint “cronies” or sure pro-President bets from small and far away places.

If the WKF has a poor gender ratio, it is even worse at the continental and national federation levels. It is shocking to say the least that the African (UFAK), Asian (AKF) and European (EKF and probably also the Mediterranean or MKF if information was available) continental federations do not have any female representation in their Executive Committees (the Pan-America and Oceania Federations are only slightly better in having one each). Many national federations also seem to be devoid of any female participation including the recently admitted provisional member of the WKF the English Karate Federation, even when GBR and England can boast of great names of female athletes from the past such as Molly Samuels, who continue to be active. This great imbalance in gender equity in the face of a wealth of female talent must be seriously addressed by the WKF leadership before it explodes into a political issue. In the name of promoting gender-equity the President/EC has the power to make appointments to the EC and all of the Commissions. However the important goal of gender-equity must not be manipulated to suit partisan ends by bringing in “friendly” candidates with poor karate credential from “banana republics” or small islands of the Pacific, when there are great female candidates available with legitimate karate credentials elsewhere.

Non-karate weak female candidates “brought” into the EC

It is puzzling that the WKF leadership has chosen to induct women into their fold with questionable karate credentials or none at all, over the great ex-female fighters from the traditional European power houses of karate such as those unforgettable multiple medal/year winners; Guus van Mourik of Holland; Molly Samuels, Toney sisters and Duggin of England; S. Berger, Girardet, Belhiti, Leroy and Fischer of France; Hasama and Mie Nakayama (of kata fame) of Japan, to name a few. It is nice that at long last a bona fide albeit “quiet” female karateka Yrsa Linqvist was brought into the EC at WKF-18 of 2006 in Finland to replace fellow Finn Rita

Rairama, but it is troubling that she appears to have been willingly co-opted into the inner club for service wherever else they see a use for her, such as in the EC of the EKF. The current President of Karate Canada karateka Rebecca Khoury appears well suited to be the EC of the WKF, but she is not even in the continental EC, the PKF. Once again the same faces are “everywhere”. Why have not the great karate women been courted to bring more class and dignity to this organization? Instead “political women” with little or no karate background have been “wined and dined” to hold elective and appointive posts in the WKF. It is normal to assume that non-karate people will tend to give unconditional support to leaders because of their inner sense of insecurity stemming from their non-karate background. Therefore they do not make good candidates. This practice has a long history going back to the long Delcourt years (one ex-EC member, a Singapore perfume tycoon Mr. B. comes to mind), but it appears to have deteriorated even further under the leadership of Espinos.

Since it is obvious that the supply of available bona fide karate-qualified women is not the problem, the continued inaction to change the disproportionate male-female ratio may be perceived as a deliberate design. In the name of democracy and the IOC slogan of “fair-play”, this blatant male-bias of the WKF-EC membership is an anachronism of the past that must no longer be tolerated. Allow us to clarify here that implicit in gender equity is also the issue of the empowerment of women. So not only must there be more women in the EC but they must also be in positions of real authority to make a difference. The old game of making cosmetic appointments with weak or no karate-credentials must be discontinued. The problem with bringing in non-karate political people is that they tend to prevent bona fide karate talent from advancing and tend to fall prey to political loyalties over objective judgments.

Here we have also to ask ourselves a larger question overriding gender. Should there not be a basic requirement in the WKF statutes that requires all who want to hold an elected or appointed position to possess genuine karate qualifications of at least a third dan (such as the refereeing system which has both dan and age requirements)? It is also interesting that the revised 2006 WKF statutes have omitted the requirement of bona fide dan grades of candidates for the Presidency and Secretary General. There can only be one reason for abolishing this requirement and most agree that it is to bring into the halls of power, cronies with political loyalties rather than a genuine karate agenda.

Rumor has it that at least 2 women and several men in the all-important WKF-EC have no karate training at all, but merely political connections with the inner circle of the WKF. With the wealth of male and female karate talent that exists all over the world, especially Europe, it is somewhat incomprehensible that important WKF positions are held by people who probably never practiced karate and/or are from “banana republics” with no decent karate programs to speak of, suggesting to many that political connections may be enough to gain positions in the WKF. What is Margarita Lenoa doing in the WKF-EC? Who is Lenoa may be a more appropriate question to ask? This is an example of a candidate “being brought in from the blues” for political expediency than the good of the organization. And now the campaign has begun to “build her up” by citing the national honor she was recently bestowed in Fiji by this remote Pacific island’s “chief”. Imagine the “jump” from the likes of karate inactive little countries like Fiji and Benin to becoming a member of the EC of an IOC member international sports federation. This “big jump” brings with it great social status and national honors that these folks never enjoyed before in their own countries, but thanks to their WKF political appointments they are now “big shots” in their countries. Come-on guys, the “Margarita Lenoas” in the WKF “need karate more than karate needs them”. One would have thought that after the death of the longtime respected Australian WKF-treasurer John Halpin in January of 2007, someone else from Australia or at least New Zealand would have been groomed as his replacement in the EC.

This current practice of enlisting non-karatekas or weak ones into WKF management positions is rather troubling for an international sporting federation in desperate pursuit of the Olympic dream for the sport. The WKF must be run by qualified karate people for karate people. The selection of political cronies or a sure “yes” man/woman bet over genuine karate talent is unacceptable and a

prime breeding ground for cronyism and system-wide corruption. This was a practice for which the previous Delcourt administration was admonished, one which eventually led to his unpopularity and downfall. In the quest to improve gender equality within the WKF the karate credentials of candidates must not be compromised and “cronies” or simple opportunists brought in to enhance leadership’s support for partisan agendas.

This issue of gender justice within WKF will not disappear as some in the WKF would wish it. Instead it only promises to pick up steam, as evidenced at the World University Karate Championships held in Belgrade, Serbia (8 July 2004), where an entire conference was dedicated to this subject entitled; “Position and Presence of Women in Karate, Worldwide”. In addition and more importantly the IOC under the Jacques Rogge leadership has also taken up this cause recently as never before, in conjunction with the U.N. I think it is time for genuine karatekas in positions of leadership to openly voice their opposition to what is essentially a “cancerous” growth within this world organization, by engaging in a loud campaign to keep karate-unqualified males and females out of all appointments, with the exception of maybe the Medical and Legal Commissions (even here candidates with karate qualifications must be given priority). All change of statutes to make the WKF more friendly to non-karate candidates such as not requiring bona fide karate credentials, must be resisted and exposed for what they really serve, which is political expediency and not the good of the organization that belongs to us all.

Need for stricter proof of nationality and home-country residence for elective office

A related issue prone to cronyism which has only recently drawn attention are the cases of EC members who clearly do not reside in the countries they represent, and in some cases are even opposed by their national federations.

The prime example of this is longtime EC member (of both WKF and EKF) and current 1st Vice-President of the EKF Gunnar Nordahl. It is a well known fact that Nordahl the Norwegian lives permanently in the USA (has lived in Texas for more than 20 years and continues to do so) but serves in the EKF and WKF EC as the man from Norway. With vague support from the Norwegian Martial Arts Federation (some bull...as their Honorary Life President or something like that), he has circumvented the home-country residency requirement with the apparent support of Espinos, who obviously sees in him a special value. Residency-requirements must be made mandatory for all elective posts in the WKF system, as is the case with our “parent body” the IOC. Nordahl’s case is by no means an exception. More recently Bill Mok, another “unknown” was brought into the EC of the WKF by the recently deceased “Asian godfather” Jose Achiam (at the 2004 WKF-17 in Monterrey, Mexico) “under the radar screen” via the Asian Karate Federation, supposedly representing Hong Kong (on numerous occasions he told this writer that he lives retired in Brisbane, Australia and claimed to be the Honorary President for Life of the Hong Kong Karate Federation, a claim that cannot be confirmed by the list provided on the website of the HK Karate Federation). With Jose Achiam’s recent death Bill Mok’s days in the EC may be numbered. It is a question of time before Mok is out and the seat filled by another Asian candidate. Finally in late 2008 Xuhui Wang a candidate representing China proper was admitted into the WKF-EC to fill the vacancy created by Achiam’s death.

These appointments remind us of a common practice of the past when Japanese citizens with dubious claims of citizenship and or residency (especially in the refereeing sector) filled national delegations from many parts of the world headed for WKF events. Both Nishiyama and Okazaki of JKA repute were both members of the American delegation at WUKO-2 of Paris in 1972. This practice of an over-representation of Japan through overseas Japanese instructors manifested itself especially acutely in the refereeing sector, but was eventually dealt with through stricter passport/citizenship controls.

2006 WKF - Statutes vs. National Law?

Articles 13.18/13.19 and 5.2 of the new 2006 WKF constitution have placed it on a collision course with the national laws of independent countries. Can anyone imagine the Constitution of a UN member allowing for such transgressions on their national sovereignty and possibly national law? The UN has a reasonable forum for the expression of national sovereignty in the General Assembly as well as ten 2-year memberships from the General Assembly in the Security Council, albeit without veto power. In most countries, rules for the formal registration of civic organizations like national karate federations clearly stipulate the nature of acceptable relations with international organizations, which is never one of subservience. At all times and in all actions, registered civic organizations are bound by national and not international authority. In fact when it is required by national rules that posts in local organizations can only be held through elections, no international body can contradict this (thus the caveat in the same Article 13.19; "when national legislation does not allow so, they will be invited to attend, and will also in all cases be attributed a preferential place in all manifestations, events and championships"). Article 5.7 is also a "toothless" statement (that governments cannot designate members of a national federation etc), especially if public funding is the main source of the federation's income. The only recourse international non-state organizations have is to take it out on member-organizations and thereby victimize athletes, such as almost happened with Iraqi athletes only a few weeks before the 2008 Beijing Olympics. In any case the new statutes confronting national laws and sovereignty have no validity whatsoever in the courts, and are only intended to scare weak and "cowardly" member federations. They have the potential however to alienate national governments in their support for our Olympic cause. However it should be pointed out that the precedent for this was established by the Olympic Charter which pronounces clearly that IOC members are not NOC delegates to the IOC but the reverse. This is supposedly to protect members of the IOC from national politics, but it is probably to divide citizen from country and ensure allegiance for the leadership of the IOC at all times.

While on the one hand Espinos appears to be desperately making the rounds to meet national Olympic Committees and potentially helpful government officials to assist in our quest for Olympic inclusion, on the other hand he has enacted statutes that clearly infringe on their sovereign rights, by for example trying to make the home-government approved constitution of these national federations subservient to WKF statutes. The big question is how will this breach of sovereignty comport with national governments and their laws? We have to be concerned that if by such statutory actions, the WKF has not inadvertently set itself up for confrontations with national governments? Surely such provocation can only generate more enemies than friends among potentially helpful governments.

We must never forget that sovereignty is an inalienable right protected by international law. Such rights are recognized in the General Principles of Law of all democratic legal systems, and cannot be surrendered away under any circumstance (just like certain inalienable rights of individuals found in all democratic constitutions, such as habeas corpus).

All efforts to curtail sovereignty in the new "customized" 2006 Constitution of the WKF will not stand in any court of the world, as national federations are foremost bound by national legislation. Moreover the influence of national governments over their Olympic Committees through the medium of funding, facilities and more is all too well known, especially in poor and autocratic nations. Therefore such transgressions only serve to alienate governments and create more obstacles in our quest for Olympic inclusion. The revised 2006 Constitution of the WKF is simply a poorly crafted provocative and undiplomatic document that is unsuitable for a supposedly democratic international sporting federation representing world karate. "Give and take" diplomacy and not decrees from above should be the guiding principle of management in the WKF.

A prostrate WKF Congress - victim of "triple rape"

This "family" of national federations expressed as the WKF Congress is truly the victim of a "triple rape" committed by the Espinos-inspired 2006 Constitution. First, national endorsement

requirement for all EC candidates is done away with, and now national constitutions must be approved by this same EC a priori. Finally, national federations are now mandated to accept WKF-EC members as full members of their own national ECs. By a "stroke of the pen", the national sovereignty of member federations was reduced to "nothing".

A long time insider recently described the Congress of national federations as "neither dead nor alive, but now thanks to the hastily approved 2006 Statutes they exist merely to validate the President's wishes". He went on to add that; "we did this to ourselves". I am sure that it is unheard of for an IOC-recognized sports federation (WKF) to enact statutes that will allow for the imposition of candidates into the EC of national federations, much less force their constitution to be in compliance through a priori approval requirements at the time of application for membership (WKF Statute 2006 ; Articles 13.18 ; 13.19 and 5.2). However, one remaining tool of this now mere symbol of supreme authority that is always guaranteed to work, is the power of the vote to "kick the bums out", as they say in the US of Congressmen and Senators when they no longer serve the electorate but themselves and their corporate sponsors. The failure of the WKF Congress to protect and exercise her duties is a sad and poor reflection of the inability of all karatekas to defend the General Principles of democratic Laws in their own organization. In allowing a small group to manipulate a WKF meant for all to such proportions, we have failed as martial artists, concerned citizens and educated human beings who value the democratic way of life enough to defend it with "our lives". There appears to have been more cohesion among the general membership in the past for national sovereignty than now. When at the height of the WKF-ITKF rivalry a two national federation policy was recommended by the IOC (one representing the WKF and the other the ITKF) to the WKF leadership for all member-federations to adopt, there was great opposition to this from national federations and their Olympic Committees. United they unanimously rejected this IOC "imposition from above" of what was clearly an unprecedented dual-federation policy. Eventually this opposition won out. "Today", thanks to the silence of the general membership there appears to be no viable opposition whatsoever to this even greater threat to the national sovereignty of member federations from within.

Conclusion

The general disregard for internal democratic norms and national sovereignty characterizing the current leadership is an unhealthy development by the standards of mature Western democracies and a poor example set for the new democracies that have emerged after years of dictatorial rule. Unlike Delcourt, Espinos who is from the "dark days" of Franco's dictatorship should be the first to understand the importance of setting a good example. If these manipulations of democratic norms go unchecked they will weaken our foundations through grassroots alienation of members, athletes and national federations. Even though by statute the Congress of national federations is the highest authority of the WKF, within 10 years this authority has been severely usurped by the current administration. Statutes have been revised to radically increase political controls over national federations which were approved routinely by an "accosted" Congress. This administration appears to be working hard to go down in WKF history as the one that destroyed the legitimate authority of the Congress for optimal performance of her mandated duties. In the process this administration also appears to have severely weakened if not destroyed the principle of checks and balances between the three branches of the WKF, the Presidency, EC and the Congress of national federations. This is a principle respected by all IOC-recognized sporting federations, including the "big ones" like FIFA. The blatant disregard for the most basic principle of international relations and the General Principles of democratic Law has clearly lead to autocratic inclinations and the rapid erosion of a fraternal democratic spirit among all member federations. Universal fraternity of the past has been replaced by "cliques". In committing that blatant act against the Slovak Karate Union (SKU) in October 2002, the current regime has clearly overstepped established boundaries and violated the national sovereignty of all member federations, not just the Slovak Karate Union. The support for an un-endorsed candidate Culen of Slovakia to be a member of the EKF-WKF EC (2002-2005) even after the infamous debacle that this support got the WKF into (legal judgment against the WKF by the Court of Arbitration for

Sport in favor of the Slovak Karate Union) is symptomatic of what appears like an endemic problem. As if this embarrassing defeat was not enough, the hard line interpretation and application of Article 21.9 prohibiting relations with “rival organizations” appears to be leading the WKF in the same direction. Moreover thanks to the unchecked manipulation of statutes (WKF Statute Article 10 on Eligibility) and a “rubber-stamping” EC, “veteran 2-term” Espinos-platform candidates will no longer require national endorsement for WKF-EKF posts. In fact given a pro-Espinos EC and WKF Congress even one term candidates will not require such endorsement (with 2/3 EC vote to continue and 2/3 Congress votes for election candidature). If this is not an effort to circumvent the power of the highest WKF body, the Congress of federations representing supposedly in excess of 175 member national federations, what is? This statute essentially frees “Espinos-men” from national controls while ensuring personal loyalty and the growth of cronyism. This practice promises to generate complete in-bred leadership, as only members of the EC “Club” will be eligible for the Presidency (there is also a 4-year EC membership requirement for such candidacy). At-large candidates from the general Congress will be kept out. Such subversions of a healthy democratic process have serious implications for the WKF’s future as a well run democratic organization. Although the WKF is led by the EKF, it is important that their leadership must be inclusive of qualified karate talent from the rest of the WKF-world.

For all the “bad” that the CAS/TAS debacle triggered for the Espinos leadership of the WKF, there was one major positive consequence. It forced the current leadership to come out with a clearer and more concise version of the WKF Statutes fit for public reading, unlike the “vague mess” of the past. The general membership can now see more clearly how they are being subjected to “statutory rape”. With all his failings the administration of Jacques Delcourt never attempted to so blatantly trample on the rights of national federations and their individual members, even though he had his share of “cronies” in service and did contribute towards laying the foundations for this onslaught. It appears that President Espinos and his EC have managed to do in 10 short years what Delcourt was unable to in 26.

A self-fulfilling architect?

There is a “bottom line” explanation for all these autocratic developments, especially those that make it easy for candidates un-endorsed by federations to present themselves to continue in office for “life”. It may well be that Mr. Espinos is preparing to be insulated from any potential “home grown” opposition from the Spanish Karate Federation (RFEK y DA). They have had their differences and so their eternal support cannot be taken for granted. Under the new statutes he will not need such support to present him-self for elections and continue for life as President of the WKF. A good friend of mine who is an “inside veteran” recently joked that, “Espinos is laying land-mines in the field” for future contingencies. The common strategy of those who plan to be around “forever” is to identify rivals and eliminate them in early rounds (just like the actions of “one-handed” referees in karate matches right-ha! ha!). This is a good reason why there must not be “full-time employment opportunities” in the WKF because it tends to generate survival instincts that often brings out the worst in human beings, especially the disrespect for democratic norms. However appealing his or her work what we do not need in these times is a benevolent dictator, because history has shown clearly a “million” times that they all eventually go down the same path of destructive dictatorship.

Wanted, a long overdue Ethics Commission a la IOC in the WKF

The failure to set up a much needed and overdue Ethics Commission with strict guidelines is a rather glaring omission of the new statutes, especially when such a Commission “stares you in the face” in the Olympic Charter. At a time when all international sports federations are racing to adopt ethical guidelines to keep abreast of the IOC, the WKF leadership has chosen to ignore this need, preferring instead to “pick and choose” from the Olympic Charter whatever suits their long term political agenda. To revamp her badly tarnished image under Samaranch, the IOC in 1999 established an independent Ethics Commission. This Commission is composed of 5 outsiders of international repute with supposedly no connections to the Olympic family of organizations, such

as the ex-UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar (oops! an old and close friend of the senior Samaranch from Peru); 3 IOC members, and 1 peer-elected athletic representative, for a total of 9. Most importantly they were provided with an independent source of income from the budget of the Ethics Foundation. Many feel that the KOI-WKF conflict of interest situation will not have emerged to progress to the degree that it has, had there been a viable WKF ethics commission a la IOC with clear statutory authority and financial independence.

Need for a Nominations Committee a la IOC to screen out “undesirables” before elections

In addition to an Ethics Commission, the 110th IOC Session of December 1999 also established a Nominations Commission to screen all candidates nominated for elections and prevent those with a “dirty” past (such as a fascist history, criminal record, felony convictions etc) from slipping through and getting elected to high office in the IOC. It is common knowledge that many with dubious backgrounds have served in high office within the IOC, the most well known in recent times being Samaranch and Un Yong Kim, but many were surprised when current Executive Board member Richard Carrion of Puerto Rico was re-elected at the 120th IOC Session of Beijing, given the fact that the US Justice Department had fined Banco Popular of Puerto Rico \$US21.6 million in 2003 for money laundering, under his watch as Chairman and CEO of this family owned bank. Only time will tell if the IOC in establishing the Ethics and Nomination Commissions was truly serious about revamping the organization from the bottom up or if there are enough “cracks to slip through”. There were already negative rumors before and after the election of Samaranch junior as an IOC member in 2001 with support of the incoming President Rogge, just as dad senior was on his way out. “Junior” did however fail to get into the Executive Board of the IOC at the 2007 118th IOC Session in Guatemala.

If this Commission works properly, it may drastically reduce characters with a corrupt past from getting-in and tarnishing whatever good image Rogge is trying to rebuild of the IOC during his time in office. In the WKF, to ensure independence and integrity such a commission must be established by the Congress of the WKF with a mandate to ensure that candidates nominated for elective and non-elective posts have proper karate credentials, have no criminal backgrounds (political or otherwise) and are not blatantly visible “cronies” either.

Wanted-a Congress elected Independent Disciplinary and Legal Commission

Our “parent” body the IOC no longer has an internal legal system to deal with grievances between members as well as against the IOC. In 1983 the IOC delegated or rather “contracted” this function to an independent body called the Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS or TAS in French). Any dispute within the IOC-world (which includes the WKF and her world of national federations, clubs and athletes) can be brought before the CAS/TAS. CAS/TAS is an independent body that receives only 1/3 of her budget from the IOC. All IOC members are bound by CAS verdicts which are final. Some NOC’s have their own internal version of arbitration courts, but CAS/TAS in Lausanne is the final authority on all sports arbitration cases. Appeals from the national sports arbitration courts can be taken to CAS-Lausanne for a final verdict but not vice-versa.

While the WKF does have a Disciplinary and Legal Commission (DLC) by statute (article 21.1), it is appointed by the EC and therefore subservient to it for the dispensing of disciplinary and legal actions. Article 21.2 stipulates that any dispute “arising from the application or interpretation of the WKF Statutes will be settled exclusively by a Tribunal formed by the DLC following it’s rules”. Then Article 21.12 goes on to say that “affiliated members and individuals shall commit themselves to accept no authority other than the one of the WKF”. However as a member of the IOC community of respectable international federations it appears that the WKF is forced to concede in the end that “an appeal before the Court of Arbitration for Sports (TAS/CAS) is only possible after having exhausted all the internal resources foreseen in the WKF Statutes and Disciplinary Rules” (article 21.12). This appears like yet another face-saving escape caveat for the WKF.

So without recourse to an internal independent legal body as highlighted by the bad experience of the Slovak Karate Union of 2002/03 looming in the background as a precedent, the only genuine source of legal redress for grievances against the WKF will continue to be the CAS. Both clubs and individual athletes can submit initial cases or appeals against a verdict from elsewhere before CAS/TAS (for a brief account of CAS see Simon Gardner's 'Sports Law' pg.232 and/or I.S. Blackshaw's 'Mediating Sports Disputes', pg.50).

The three branch system of checks and balances typical of democratic governance subverted in the WKF by "platform" politics

There is a reason why the founding fathers of the philosophy of representative governance devised multiple branches of governance such as the Executive, Legislature and the Judiciary (as in the USA). This is a device designed to prevent the concentration and abuse of power after elections are over. Through a system of checks and balances the development of potentially abusive authority could be best prevented under such a multi-tiered system of governance, each with domain over an important sector of governance and society. However even under such a system, subversion of democratic checks and balances occurs when control of two or more branches of this system by the same party negates the checks and balances good intended for the system (such as the Legislature, Judiciary and the Executive branch as in the USA). Another basic flaw to the American democracy of checks and balances is the fact that the Executive branch/President appoints the Judicial branch (all judges to the Supreme Court). So, even an established representative democracy cannot guarantee abuses of the principle of checks and balances.

Very similar developments have taken place within the WKF. The three-tier system was essentially reduced to two when the EC became an "arm" subservient to the Presidency through the practice of platform-politics, even though the vast majority of members in this body are elected by members of the General Congress. The practice of "platform-politics" will only allow the chosen few to present themselves as candidates for elections. This practice has essentially negated the value of the EC as an independent body within the WKF and paralyzed the Congress by making entry into the EC difficult as at large Congress members will be excluded from aspiring for the Presidency because of the 4-year prior EC-service requirement. Thus the system of checks and balances devised early in the history of the WKF has become obsolete, having reduced the entire organization to becoming an extension of the President/Executive branch. Under these circumstances the burden of protecting representative democracy in the WKF falls on the Congress of national federations and the extent to which they are able to maintain their independent authority from being curbed by the President and the Executive Committee. Unfortunately the Congress appears to have become a "house divided", thanks to the successful global collusions/alliances formed in their favor by Espinos and his group. However the bottom line is that if they (Congress of national federations) "stand up" united and face these challenges to a democratic system of checks and balances, they can still "kick the bums out" by effective use of Article 22 and 23 of the Statutes.

As a fitting end to this important section on the political-sociology of the WKF I would like to quote an expert legal counsel very familiar with the WKF. "When the constitution of a 40-year old IOC-member international sports federation is revised too often in a short period of time, it usually means only one thing, manipulation of statutes to suit partisan political agendas". We are "surprised" that the current leadership has yet to invoke the post 9/11 "terrorist threat" a la George Bush as a "cause celebre" for radically increasing Presidential power and demolishing what little remains of the sovereign rights of national federations in the 2006 WKF Statutes. As with the CAS/TAS award in favor of the Slovak Karate Union, we suggest that you read the entire 2006 Revised Statutes with great care (important items are boxed for your convenience), as the "devil usually hides in the details".

Why the double standards for the Executive Committee (EC) and the Referees Commission (RC)?

It is interesting to note that while “veteran” 2-term members of the EC (including the President) are now statutorily exempted from endorsement by national federations, referees/judges (with the exception of the EC appointed Referees Commission/Chairman who may remain with a 2/3 vote of the EC) must at all times have full national support. This clear case of double standards was well expressed by one senior referee as; “one rule for them (WKF statute 4.4.6 and EKF statute Article 9 clause 10 of the pre-2006 version) and another for the rest of us”.

There are serious internal concerns on all matters of importance for the future of the WKF as a legitimate democratic karate organization, but this has never translated into any meaningful action, except when Espinos was campaigning for the top job in 1998. The fact is the Congress of national federations must find a way to shirk-off the divisions created inside of her by the leadership (through continental alliances in favor of Espinos-Yerolimpos axis of power) and once again represent the general will of all members, with dignity and integrity. This must include the mandatory requirement of national endorsement for all WKF positions (loss of support during tenure must not prevent candidate from completing term elected for though). Failure helps ensure “long-life” for the partisan agendas of incumbent leadership and also creates conditions for the abuse of the democratic process.

Term-limitations a la IOC for the Presidency, EC and the Chief-Referee a must

This is probably the greatest gift we can all give to ensure a healthy and democratic WKF for the future. It is the possibly the greatest change adopted by the IOC to divorce itself clearly from the Samaranch era of political and economic corruption. The record clearly shows that long tenure of service almost always tends to usher-in corruption and cronyism even in democratic organizations with a good start. This is especially so when positions in sports organizations become the sole means of livelihood for those in power, such as is the case now with Antonio Espinos, President of the WKF. When posts become the principal source of “livelihood”, the “battle” to protect this becomes more important than the larger goals of the organization. The world of sports witnessed this happening with the IOC under the long 21-year scandal-prone Presidency of Antonio Samaranch (1980-2001). The world-wide expose of the bid-city corruption scandal provoked the unanimous approval of all 50 proposals made by the special reform committee called the IOC 2000 Commission, in 1999. The most important of these that the WKF must consider adopting are, age limits (which the WKF has but provided escape clauses), term limits, an Ethics Commission and the screening of all candidates for elections by a specially set up Nominations Commission to include at least one athlete. The life-term policy of Samaranch was replaced by term limitations for all elected members, including the President (8-year term plus re-election for a final 4 for a total of 12 years). Members of the Executive Board (equivalent to the EC in the WKF) can serve 2-terms for up to 8 years and can only return to be elected again after a 2-year hiatus. The other 115 regular members hold 4-year terms with no maximum limit. It is interesting to note that Samaranch even altered the age limit for candidates from 70 to 80 to be able to serve beyond 1996. It was lowered back to 70 years at the 1999 110th Session. The radical increase in the representation of athletes is also very conspicuous. For this the maximum membership was increased from 100 to 115, with all 15 new seats being allocated to athletes elected by their own peers for an 8-year non-renewable term (the total composition is as follows; 15 presidents of international federations; 15 presidents of national Olympic committees and 70 individual members (no country is allowed more than 1 elected member, but some like Spain have exceeded this limit). The seats reserved for the Athletes Commission has since been increased to 17 (12 to be elected by peers and 7 as Presidential prerogatives to satisfy gender and geographical equity issues).

All these “radical” changes were unanimously approved to put an end to the Samaranch era of corruption and cronyism and to elevate the interests of athletes to the top. In a sense we have to

be thankful to the Samaranch-administration for triggering the chain of events that ultimately culminated in the cry for term limitations.

Any concern for the healthy long-term growth of the WKF as a respected IOC-recognized organization must include an urgent need for the introduction of a long overdue policy of term limits for the Presidency, the EC and the important appointed Chairman of the Referees Commission. Current statutes place no limits on terms of service for elective positions and 69 as the age limit for the members of Commissions. The healthy rejuvenation of management requires such a policy. Jacques Delcourt stayed on as President of WUKO-WKF for 28 long years, but will soon be outdone by the longest serving "survivor" of them all, Chief-Referee Tommy Morris (Chairman EKF-RC between 1984-2005, and WKF-RC between 1986 to present). He is cited by many as a prime example of the lack of a healthy rejuvenation of leadership within the WKF, albeit in the refereeing sector (a most important sector that impacts athletes and member federations more than even any elected position). Both elected and appointed "for-life" positions tend to be self-serving of individuals who eventually succumb to the "l'etat c'est moi" mentality, by personalizing policies and subverting normal democratic processes. The most important change ever instituted by the IOC of term-limits in 1999 as a response to the Samaranch era scandals has yet to be copied by the WKF. It is no surprise that this rather visible addition was "missed" by the WKF leadership for obvious reasons. While in most aspects the 2006 revised Statutes of the WKF is an "identical" copy of the Olympic Charter (especially those articles that deprived NOCs of all national sovereignty), the most important change "ever" on term-limitations was deliberately ignored. It appears that our leadership "cherry-picked" whatever suited their partisan agenda for long-term controls, which is definitely a bad omen for the future of a democratic WKF.

Unlike the Olympic Charter that does not require any Executive Board (= Executive Committee in WKF) service for Presidential candidates (see Article 20 of the Olympic Charter 2007, page 46) WKF Statutes require a 4-year minimum membership of the EC. This unique pre-requisite coupled with the practice of platform politics controlling entry into the EC seriously restricts the democratic process in Presidential elections. Entry into the EC can only be as a Presidential-platform candidate for elections or through straight-forward Presidential co-optation to supposedly satisfy issues of gender and geographical equity. This requirement was also introduced into the EKF at their Congress during the EKF Seniors in Tenerife in 2005. This deliberate effort to circumvent democratic practices of the past is to say the least rather disturbing. This change is intended to prevent the "intrusion of outsiders", ensure life-long tenure for incumbents and institutionalize "friendly succession" from within a select group from the EC. Such manipulation of statutes to ensure long years of rule is a definite departure from past practices. Manipulating voting delegates into support for 26 years is one thing, but changing statutes "arbitrarily" to guarantee this is blatant disregard for the healthy process of a democratic succession of leadership within this international sporting federation representing the "Olympic" karate movement. The 4-year requirement coupled with platform politics (your name must be on "HIS" platform for election into the EC) is designed to prevent at-large candidates of the Congress from posing a threat. In the interest of democracy and the equality of opportunities for entry into the EC, this requirement must be removed by the Congress, the supreme authority of governance for our movement of karate.

It may be interesting to note that this new statute prescribing Presidential eligibility was first quietly put in place at the WKF level, and only after introduced into the EKF. Clearly this appears to be to ensure control over the vanguard of the WKF organization which is the EKF. It is based on the understanding that whoever controls the EKF controls the WKF.

Thanks to the new statutes, in time the entire EC could be composed of candidates without national support, but merely "Presidential platform-picks" into the EC. Since only "his people" can satisfy the minimum EC-service requirement, succession of leadership can be kept within the "family" forever.

While the long years of Jacques Delcourt's leadership of the WKF (1972-1998) was also characterized by an EC composed of longtime loyalists like Prince Adan Czatorski and Fritz Wendland (later of WKC fame), the Espinos administration has taken this practice a bold statutory-step further to ensure "rule in perpetuity". This stands in stark contrast to the current pre-occupation within all democratic societies for term limits to elected office, so as to encourage healthier systems of succession, reduce systemic alienation and the social disorder that is a consequence of this.

Since we are an IOC recognized international federation the changes adopted by the IOC in 1999 should be considered for serious adoption, and none more important than that on term-limitations. It appears that our leaders have been rather selective in the adoption of the new IOC statutes, having adopted only those changes that further the autocratic interests of the current leadership (such as Article 13.18 of the WKF 2006 Statutes that is identical to the 2004 Olympic Charter on page 28). Athletes continue to be treated poorly and given no political representation whatsoever (except for the lofty intent in the 2006 Statutes of a vague future full-rights representation in the EC, recorded as 'Transitional Dispositions') while gender equity has been equally ignored.

The most radical structural changes that the IOC has adopted in recent years after the scandals of the Samaranch years concerning term-limitations (for President and members of the Executive Board/EB); empowerment of the Athletes Commission as well as establishment of Ethics and Nominations Commissions have clearly been ignored by the WKF leadership. Not only have these changes been ignored, eligibility requirements for Presidential candidates have been strictly narrowed by requiring a 4-year service in the Executive Committee (Article 14.2 of 2006 WKF Statutes). While this EC-experience requirement may look good on paper, the practice of completely restricting entry into the EC through Presidential platform-politics has made it a powerful political weapon of the President. Besides a large number of EC-members are mere "dead-wood decorations" for personal loyalty, and so this experience will not do them any good for higher leadership posts.

The Presidential elections of 2004 in Mexico, an unhealthy trend?

Six years after his initial election to the Presidency of WKF (WKF-14 of 1998 in Brazil), Antonio Espinos was re-elected unopposed, by the Congress of the 2004 World Championships in Monterrey, Mexico. That he won is no surprise, but that there was no other candidate is misleading and an unhealthy trend that may signal yet another Delcourt-like long, for "life" appointment. We know that there were other good candidates available who chose not to contest wary of recriminations against their national federations and who were also victims of statutory disqualification (such as the required 4-year service in an EC where access is controlled by platform-politics). It is for this reason that it is important for term limitations to be mandated by the WKF Congress as soon as possible for all elective and at least one non-elective position (the Chairman of the Referees Commission). Only then will new talent with fresh ideas emerge without fear of recriminations, to lead the WKF into a future of new heights of excellence.

There were also claims of irregularities at the 2004 elections for the Presidency and some EC positions. Firstly there were complaints that many national federations were not informed in a timely fashion of the unopposed candidacy of the incumbent President. More importantly the actual conduct of the elections was apparently irregular in the following terms.

- a) Those who wished to abstain from voting and remain anonymous were unable to do so. There were two roll calls of member federations; the first to pick up the ballot paper; and the second to place this paper in the ballot box. So complete abstention was not an anonymous option; as it ought to be in all democratic election procedures.
- b) Unlike the 1998 WKF elections in Rio, there was no verification of voter-eligibility based on payment records of annual membership dues (in Brazil member federations had to show proof of active membership before being allowed to collect ballot papers). A formal list of qualified voters be placed in full view at the entrance of the voting room.

Due to the “open door” policy and lack of the proper verification of voting credentials it appeared as if delinquent but “friendly” national federations present at this 2004 WKF Congress could vote without scrutiny if needed, in spite of the earlier report to the Congress by the then WKF Treasurer John Halpin that, “less than half of all members are paying members”. All this could raise a suspicion that rules are applied against delinquent federations at elections only when it is politically expedient to do so? Unique among representatives of national federations present at this 17th Congress was the lone “delegate” of Bangladesh from Spain (he divulged to the author that he has lived continuously in Barcelona for 17 years) with clearly questionable federation credentials; a fact that did not seem to alarm those managing the election process. The power of incumbency was used to the fullest to re-elect a chosen platform of candidates. Whether such actions constitute clear voting irregularities or merely the intelligent manipulation of the democratic process, should be an issue of open debate and discussion within the WKF movement of karate, without any fear of recriminations.

Is non- payment of annual dues being manipulated?

It is unclear if non-payment of annual dues results in the loss of voting and competition rights or merely voting rights. Article 21.5 indicates that the EC “may” suspend national federations for non-payment of dues, a “may” that allows the leadership flexibility of action. We suspect that non-payment of annual membership dues does not automatically disqualify one from competition privileges simply because it is a good mix of 2 essentials for the WKF leadership, in that more competitors bring more money, and dues-delinquents can also ensure that the power of the vote can remain in the hands of a select few. If given a choice many of the poorer nations would prefer to just compete and forget about being eligible to vote. It is interesting to consider that statutes that bar voting at the Congress for non-payment of annual dues could in practice only be selectively applied as a partisan political tool. Besides the presence of “friendly and ready-to-collaborate” delinquents appeared to be tolerated at this Congress, leading some to suspect that this tolerance could have been a “back-up pool” to sway election results. The tolerance was however the concern of many present at the 17th Congress including the treasurer John Halpin who in his report earlier had warned of rampant financial delinquencies by national federations. Yet there was no public roll-call conducted to verify the eligibility of member federations to vote. Subsequently there were wild rumors of illegal voting to assist “la cosa nostra”. All this could have been prevented through proper disclosure of a current list of payment history before elections. Anything short of such transparency will invariably be viewed as “suspicious” inaction by leadership. There are already concerns regarding the future of transparency on matters concerning the WKF treasury over the recent appointment of longtime Espinos confidante Michael Dinsdale as the WKF treasurer, especially given the mysterious reason for which he was for a time “expelled for life” by the then national federation of England, the EKGB (full disclosure of the incident may be in order). Dinsdale’s switching from representing England to Great Britain and back to England in the WKF between October 2005 and mid 2007 (coinciding with the English karate crisis of the same time) is somewhat of a mystery that will be dealt with later in this chapter.

We think that responsible leadership must make public disclosure of non-payment of membership dues after annual deadline dates, but especially before elections for the Presidency and EC. This was not observed to have been done in the elections of recent years. It is possible that “they” (EC) knew, but it is just as important that we (Congress) are also privy to this important information. How can the WKF leadership brag to having 175 member federations when rumor has it that many are “non-paying members”. Until the facts are made public we only have these rumors to go by. In the interest of knowing the truth as to who can vote, there must be full and timely disclosure of all relevant information. It is more important to share truthful information with the general membership than to use what many perceive as “inflated” membership numbers to impress the IOC and the rest of the world.

Leadership philosophy & style - “All power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely” (Lord Acton)

Andrew Jennings in his excellent piece on corruption within the IOC summed up best the human predicament relating to power within organizations.*(2)

“once they have lived that life of luxury and jetting around hobnobbing with world leaders, they cant retire to mowing the lawn in their back gardens. They get too used to the power, it rejuvenates them; it's like monkey glands. Without it, they soon waste away”.

It is amazing how quickly even leaders from very humble backgrounds can get used to worldly comforts and suddenly behave like they were born with it. The twenty-six years of Delcourt's leadership style can best be described as one of “democratic” autocracy. He ruled over the WKF with “consensual” authority by manipulating the process and surrounding himself with an inner circle of loyalists, many with questionable karate credentials, but all with national federation support. By the mid 1980s he was able take control of the WKF using his strong EKF base by wresting control of the WKF from the Japan Karate Federation (the JKF was then known as FAJKO) and their overseas Japanese network. It was this tradition of a single strong man rule that was passed down to his successor Mr. Antonio Espinos in 1998. 10 years under the new leadership it appears that this tradition of management continues to thrive.

However, unlike Delcourt the current WKF-EKF President Antonio Espinos hails from a tradition of political dictatorship and oppressed social obedience from the long years of dictatorial rule of Spain by General Franco (1939-1975), preceded by centuries of autocratic rule by the Spanish monarchy-nobility. While Spain became a political democracy after the death of Franco in 1975 (actually a new democratic constitution replaced the old autocratic one in 1978), this is a rather recent development in a long tradition of oppression. It has long since been discussed in academic and other circles, if civic and political leaders from this generation tend to have a “natural” predisposition for autocratic sentiments and rule in the best of the “Caudillo” tradition that flourished all over the Hispanic world until recent times. There are those who believe that this same social order continues to thrive in different degrees of intensity in the civic life of modern Hispanic societies. Then there is also the element of “machismo” to contend with in these societies at all levels; from family to the work-place and finally the state. There is no escaping the fact that we are products of our history, geography and a powerful socialization process from “birth to death”.

It is somewhat intriguing that the national karate leadership of a Western Europe that “eats, sleeps and breathes” democracy in all facets of civic life also gives birth to karate leaders of the autocratic mold. One could possibly expect this kind of behavior to emerge from the leadership of national karate federations of the recently “liberated” ex-communist countries who probably need more time to shed their autocratic past completely, but not from Western European countries with old democratic traditions. This apparent contradiction between the need to control and a democratic legacy may well explain the management predicament within the WKF. Answers for this dilemma may lie in the legacy of recent political history (the evolution of an authoritarian political culture) and a karate-bushido ideology of unquestioning loyalty to leadership. After 10 years of new management it appears that authoritarian centralism and not the consensual transparency that one expects from democracy is the guiding principle of leadership in the WKF under the Espinos Presidency.

It is always interesting to examine the source of executive authority, in this case as it appears to sustain the incumbent President Espinos. This will give us an insight into the inner workings of the WKF; the various contending forces, and how they all come together every 6 years for the benefit of the leader Mr. Espinos who came to power in 1998 (actually in 1994 at WKF-12 in Malaysia, when Delcourt was “stripped” of his power base, and to “to save his own skin” he agreed to the removal of all his key players out of their EC positions). At the 1998 Rio Congress

of WKF-14 Antonio Espinos was able to take final control by taking advantage of the general disappointment in Delcourt among members at large, for what was perceived as his Olympic debacle (a much publicized “deal” from Antonio Samaranch of the IOC to Antonio Espinos that further concessions to the WKF will be conditional upon the resignation of Jacques Delcourt, worked as the last straw).

Now that we have witnessed 10 years of the Espinos reign without the Olympic dream accomplished it may be relevant to examine the possible sources of this reign of power within the WKF arena and in the process learn something about the internal political dynamics of the organization. As someone who was involved behind the scenes in the initial campaign in Malaysia (1994) to replace Delcourt I do have some personal insights on the matter. Spain as a powerhouse of WKF/EKF karate since 1980 has a “legitimate right” to leadership positions within the organization. Candidate Espinos was not only of good karate pedigree (was apparently a member of the Spanish national team pool in the early seventies), but also had useful communication credentials such as fluency in Spanish, English, French and German. He appeared at the right time on the scene as a prime “educated” candidate for the Presidency of a WKF that desperately needed a new “lease of life”, after the dashed IOC-recognition dreams. The Asians led by the JKF (Japan Karate Federation) among others had enough of the lingering arrogance of a now “lame duck” President Delcourt, and so were predisposed to support Espinos, as were the majority of member federations from the other parts of Asia. Hispanic America could not wait for one of their own kind to lead the WKF and so Espinos had an entire continent of “barrio boys” behind him. The new Europe of “liberated” nations of the East (and ex-Soviet republics) and the Balkans were mobilized into solidarity with the Espinos campaign through the hard work of George Yerolimpos of the Greek karate federation. Also, being new to the WKF scene this group felt little or no loyalty to Delcourt. With all these developments the climate was ripe for change and Espinos appeared on the scene as a prime candidate. The rest is history.

The Executive Committee of the WKF - a social and political analysis

As stipulated in Article 13 of the 2006 Revised Constitution the EC shall be “composed of the President and at least 22 members of whom 6 shall be permanent members from the 6 continental federations (including the new “mysterious” Mediterranean Federation that has been accorded special Continental status); 1 elected Vice-President and 15 elected members”. The new 2006 constitution also allows for the appointment by the EC of 1 extra member into this body. The practice of “platform” politics has essentially reduced the Executive Committee to becoming an arm of the President.

Over time and especially under the Espinos administration the EC has acquired more power than the “the supreme organ of the WKF”, the Congress of National Federations (as per Article 12.1 of Statute). Considering that the EC has more opportunities to meet than the Congress a lot can be approved for “rubber-stamping” by the biennial WKF Congress. One simple example of this disparity in power is Article 22.1 concerning ‘Amendments to Statutes’ which stipulates that while both the EC and National Federations in good standing can submit proposals; “in the case of National federations, proposals must be presented to the Executive Committee by at least 50% + 1 (half plus one) of all affiliated national federations having voting rights” (this is ironic considering that the Congress elects the vast majority of EC members). Another is the debilitating imposition of EC members as automatic full-members of the EC’s of all affiliated national federations (Article 13.18 and 13.19 of the 2006 Revised Statutes). “Platform” based elections has completely reduced the EC into becoming a “rubber stamp” of the President. So the more power given to the EC the greater the power the Presidents begets, without the appearance of a rule by Presidential decree. The EC also has the power to expel the 5 (or is it 6 now that the Mediterranean Karate Federation has been accorded continental status) appointed Continental Representatives and fill these vacancies temporarily until the next Congress. They can also co-opt a certain number of members to satisfy gender equity and geographical distribution. Additionally they must approve the temporary expulsion or suspension of national federations by the President for “violations of Statutes” but which actions must eventually be approved by the Congress (in the infamous case

of the WKF vs Slovak Karate Union of 2002/03 such ultimate approval was not obtained). The quiet replacement of M. Paraiso of Benin with M. Tahar Mesbahi in late 2008 may well fit somewhere in this latitude for the quiet manipulation of the EC by the President.

There are about 175 countries represented in the WKF through their national federations, but clearly only a few are represented where power resides which is in the EC. It is rather glaring that the “barrio boys” from the principal contenders of Ibero-America such as Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico together with “tiny” Puerto Rico and Curacao are all represented in the WKF-EC but this is clearly not the case with Asia and even Europe (especially the new Europe). One would think that a large majority of these EC members would be from the most active federations but in reality this is not the case. While the EKF countries dominate, a majority of candidates from the rest of the world are from small inactive federations. Almost 40% (10 of the total 24 members) are from “banana republics” with weak karate programs, probably brought into the EC for their easier allegiance often under the pretext of satisfying geographical and gender equity. 4 members of the powerful EC from Puerto Rico, Curacao, Macao, and Hong Kong are not even from independent countries, but rather territories of metropolitan powers with autonomy only in sports representation as a concession, while major karate powers like USA, Iran (great news that poor Iran was finally “brought-in” when in mid-2008 Zaeimkohan was appointed Chair of the unimportant Anti-Doping Commission), Germany and some others like South Africa have been conspicuously left out. The WKF Statute that defines a “country” (copy of Rule 31 of the Olympic Charter) as an “independent state” should clearly disqualify these non-independent units disproportionate representation in the WKF-EC. To parade these “tiny outposts” of larger nations in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans so visibly in the WKF EC is clear injustice to the big countries that have been left out. Just like the IOC, rules have clearly been bent to accommodate more members from little political dependencies that can be more easily manipulated.

The politics of fair representation in the WKF-EC is a very relevant topic for discussion, as it indicates the extent to which political choices prevail over a more proper selection of candidates for election. However it does provide us with yet another insight into the political style of the leadership of this world karate organization.

While there is an effort in Article 10.9 to prevent multiple-representation of national federations in the EC, it is also clear that it provides for too many loop-holes.

“Any National Federation cannot have more than 1(one) Executive Committee member, this without counting the President, the permanent offices (6 continental federations), the co-opted member(s) and the former WKF Presidents.”

Given the reality of “multiple federations” in single countries such as the UK (England, Wales, Scotland, N. Ireland, British Virgin Islands), Holland (Holland, Curacao, Aruba, St. Maarten), China (China, Macau and Hong Kong) USA (USA, Puerto Rico, Guam, US Virgin Islands) and France (with Guadeloupe, French-Guyane and Martinique, even if only permitted to be active internationally at the Continental level), the potential for this to influence the EC is real.

In some cases these colonies-territories are allowed to participate in the IOC-sanctioned Games of the Continental region only (such as the Central-American/Caribbean Games and the Pan-American Games) by the mother-country. In karate even if they are only allowed by the mother country to participate at the continental level this is good enough for them to be able to be involved in matters of the continental federations, all 6 of whom have permanent seats set aside in the WKF- EC. China until the recent death of Jose Achiam (circa Sept.2008) of Macau and Bill Mok of Hong Kong had 2 EC members. Multiple representations come from multiple admissions based on a clear discord between definition and the loose application of it that allows for this. For example, Article 5.4 defines a country as “an independent state recognized by the International Community”; (which it is fair to assume is the UN) and yet karate governing bodies of “colonies and territories” (all of whom choose to remain as such) ineligible for UN membership have been

admitted as national federations. Article 5.4 clarifies further admissions eligibility by stipulating that “only 1 (one) national federation per country shall be allowed. Sooner or later the EC could be filled with the multiple-representations of “colonial territories” of a few countries and other “banana republics”. Between the 6 permanent seats of continental federations, the geographical and gender “cause”, plus a few Presidential prerogative-picks here and there is more than enough to control the EC. A few “countries” will be enough to potentially “run the entire show”. If territories-colonies have to be admitted as independent nations by “bending” the rules, they should never be placed in pivotal positions elected or otherwise, because of their tenuous status and relatively small national karate programs. Does it make sense except in politically expedient terms, that both “little” Macau (until Achiam’s death in August 2008) and Hong Kong members of the powerful WKF-EC while Malaysia, Iran, Indonesia and now maybe even Vietnam with much larger and more successful karate programs are not?

Just from this brief review it is clear that the EC can and has become an arm of the President less and less answerable to the Congress of national federations that elected them. This is essentially the result of “platform” politics. The EC is also completely devoid of input from the *raison d’être* of the WKF, the athletes. This is quite contrary to pro-athlete developments in the post-Samaranch IOC. In this sense the EC is cut-off from the core units of the entire WKF, the athletes and the national federations.

The composition of the current EC leaves much to be desired in terms of the karate credentials of some of her members. It is perfectly normal to require that the official IOC-recognized world karate organization be run by “karatekas for karatekas”. England’s recent terrible experience with non-karateka administration should teach us all a valuable lesson. Instead previous requirements that members must have genuine karate qualifications have been “quietly” removed. The 2006 Revised Statutes have clearly omitted such past requirements for the post of President (4th dan) and Secretary General (3rd dan) of the WKF, paving the way for “hungry and greedy” bureaucrats to take over someday, as happened in the IOC. Currently there are a few clearly identifiable non-karatekas (as well as others with dubious karate credentials) who are members of the EC, which is sad to say also the case with some national federations. To add insult to injury these people actually “sign off” on the high karate ranks conferred by the EC to among others, Tommy Morris the Chief-Referee of the WKF.

EC membership = Candidates with bona fide karate qualifications + English speaking skills + from active National Federations.

If the leadership of the WKF has any concern for the future of this organization, then it must be required by Statute that members of the EC have proper qualifications to lead, such as bona fide karate qualifications, a working knowledge of the English language and are endorsed by national Federations that are active participants in world championships, especially in terms of athletic participation. Instead we all know that the EC is full of sycophants elected/appointed for personal loyalty rather than leadership potential. Even those with genuine karate credentials from active national federations are often people with no working knowledge of English and so remain “quiet colluders” of the President in the EC. A working knowledge of a “lingua franca” (which in this case can only be English) must be a requirement for EC membership. The “quiet” members of the EC who do not have this skill should step aside for others in their national federations (NF) who do, in the interest of ensuring a properly “educated” EC for all of us, even with the evils of platform politics to contend with. Again it is the “take all” mentality exhibited at the national level.

The “I-Me-My” take it all attitude

There is also a very high concentration of power within a few hands in the EKF and some other continental federations as well such as the PKF. This situation prevents new talent from emerging here that is needed for great future service at the WKF level. A few have taken it all and left nothing for the rest. As an example, George Yerolimpos the General Secretary of the WKF and EKF is head of the Hellenic Karate Federation, the Balkan Karate Federation, the Southeast

Karate Federation and probably also the General Secretary of the Mediterranean Karate Federation (for some reason the composition of this “continental federation” has been kept a “secret”). Espinos is President of the EKF, the WKF and probably also the yet to be disclosed Mediterranean Karate Federation. Irrespective of their talent or popularity this is not a healthy or proper representative situation as too many positions are in too few hands. Between Espinos’s loyal “barrio base” support from Ibero-America and Yerolimpos’s Balkan “backyard”, all the bases appear to be covered to protect their interests and be in control of the WKF for a long time to come. Unfortunately partisan politics of long life agendas and not the welfare of the organization is often the goal of such strategies.

Presidential authority runs amok?

The President is without doubt the first among equals, but as the EC is entirely filled with people he endorsed through elections or simply appointed (16 including 1 Vice-President are elected on his platform, while the remaining 6 are appointed by him/EC to the permanent seats allocated to the 6 continental federations), in reality he wields all powers vested in the EC by the new 2006 constitution. In addition to all the new powers given him and the EC by the 2006 constitution, article 13.4 allows him to increase EC membership further by appointing “a number of additional female members” to address gender equality. He can also do this to “improve” geographical equity. These caveats will allow the President to bring in as many people as he wants using the legitimate-sensitive gender and geographical equity issues excuses. Rather than leaving this important task in the hands of a crony-filled EC it makes more sense if there will be a clear provision in the Statutes for a certain percentage of EC members to be females with bona fide karate credentials. Such appointments should be made from the female greats mentioned earlier and not “political women”. The President is also allowed to fill EC vacancies that arise with temporary appointments until elections come along. As mentioned earlier, Article 13.4 of the new statute also permits the EC to appoint an extra member at his prerogative. Additionally when there is an “emergency” situation he can take quick action that only needs to be approved by the EC and confirmed by the Congress when it meets. With a partisan EC and a Congress reduced to a “rubber-stamping” role, Presidents are often tempted to ignore approval from these 2 bodies for decisions taken in an “emergency”, such as was found to be the case by CAS (Court of Arbitration for Sports) in the infamous expulsion of the Slovak Karate Union in 2002.

This President has by manipulating the Statutes and engaging in the practice of platform politics, restricted entry into the Executive Committee (4-year EC service requirement for eligibility as candidate for Presidential elections etc) and thereby has virtually “shut the door” on at-large candidates. This door can only be “re-opened” by a Congress “with balls” that undertakes to undo Statutes enacted favoring the political intrigues of the Espinos leadership. For now Espinos has successfully “closed the doors” on all of us and reduced the Congress to being a mere “rubber stamp” for his actions, using among other pressure agents, the long arm and tentacles of the Referees Commission chaired by the EC-appointed Tommy Moriss.

As mentioned earlier, as the most active and organized continental federation there is general consensus that EKF members deserve to play the leading role in the WKF. However the WKF as an international organization must also be open to the democratic inclusion of non-EKF talent from the rest of the world. Those elected to high office in the EC should be from the most active (in terms of participation of athletes-officials at WKF tournaments) and well organized federations, irrespective of the political stance of the country of origin or the national federation. Quality activism and not political correctness (or membership of the “Club”) must be the criteria for leadership roles. A survey of the WKF EC shows that unfortunately this was not respected in the past Delcourt administration (but Delcourt did have an Iranian Varasteh in the Directing Committee of WKF in 1972 when it was known as WUKO) or the present Espinos regime. Far too many members of the EC are from small and relatively inactive federations, while major powerhouses of WKF karate like USA, Iran, Turkey (from 1985 when they returned to WKF from ITKF until the recent 2006 appointment of Aydogan Celik into the WKF-EC), Germany, Russia and Croatia have been kept out.

Many of the more active national federations of Europe such as England, France (Didier was brought in after a hiatus of 5 years), Germany (0), Turkey (1 in Celik); Bosnia-Herzegovina (0); Croatia (0), Holland (0); Austria (0); Switzerland (0) and Russia (0) are under-represented in the EC of the WKF. On the other hand there is clearly disproportionate representation from much less active federations of Europe such as Finland (Riita Rairama, who resigned after WKF-17 2006 in Finland and fellow Finn Yrsa Linqvist took her place) and Norway (G. Nordahl). Nordahl is that unique EC member who has lived and worked permanently in the USA "all his life" (all through his 20 plus year WKF "service") but who in addition to being a longtime member of the WKF-EC, in 2005 was also elected to become the 1st vice-president of the EKF (apparently only needing the symbolic support of his national federation to keep everything "legal" and within EKF-WKF pre-2006 statutes; but thanks to article 13.18 and 13.19 of the new October 2006 Revised Statutes, as a WKF-EC member he is automatically a full member of the EC of the Norwegian federation, without having to go through the normal national election process). It is somewhat strange that while there are strict passport and residence requirements for athletes, more or less as per IOC regulations, WKF-EC-members need only comply with passport requirements not residence. With so much talent spread all over the EKF scene, it is to say the least very surprising that a Norwegian living in the US is the only suitable candidate. Then there is Martin Culens of Slovakia who although opposed by his own national federation after October 2002, was for many years a member of both the WKF and EKF-EC. This EC member will be remembered for the infamy brought on the WKF and President Espinos over the arbitrary expulsion of the Slovak Karate Union from the WKF. The consequent reinstatement of the SKU into the WKF was a "slap in the face" for President Espinos who in his incomprehensible but staunch support for Culen violated internal statutes, international arbitration court precedents and above all the "General Principles of Law" and ethics that mature democratic international organizations are expected to uphold, especially those that are members of the IOC.

It is very legitimate to ask why there has never been a mandatory requirement for bona fide karate dan-grades for members of the EC (even if only a basic black belt), and more importantly why is this legitimate past requirement for the Presidency and the Secretary General now omitted from the 2006 revised WKF Statutes? Why are non-karate people as well as dubious ones being "loaded" into the EC? In fact the WKF should take the lead in eventually making authentic karate qualifications a requirement for posts even at the national federation level. Leaving the "door open" to non-karate people only increases the atmosphere of internal political strife, as in all cases such appointments are politically motivated and their sincerity towards karate extremely questionable. As revealed in an earlier chapter this was clearly exhibited not too long ago in England when non-karate people helped form a new national governing body Karate England (Nov.2005) after disbanding the existing successful governing body of long years (11 years we believe), the EKGB (under the guise of uniting a divided English karate scene), and then being disbanded within slightly more than a year of operations (feb.2007). This left English karate with no national governing body or membership in the WKF. As a consequence, for the first time in the history of WKF karate there was no English team at the 42nd European Championships in Slovakia.

Frankly even after having witnessed so much unnecessary internal strife, we do not understand why karate people are so often incapable of managing their own homes. Why is there so much in-fighting, that to salvage the whole they have to resort to the "good offices" of external non-karate management, as was the recent case in England? All that these "outsiders" did in England was to destroy a national governing body that had existed very successfully for 11 years (EKGB), raid the coffers, go bankrupt and leave English karate in ruins, with no national body or membership in the WKF/EKF. This says a lot about the mind of karate leaders who appear to be consumed by super-egos and petty in-fighting generated over time by "archaic "foreign" codes of the past. In the name of these false codes of honor and other universal ideals they destroy each other and organizations they belong to.

The written source of new enhanced Presidential authority is the 2006 Revised Statute of the WKF, which is essentially an effort to “plug-in” all holes in previous statutes that appeared to check the abuse of authority. However the unchallenged authority of the Espinos Presidency comes basically from a Congress weakened by an international network of pro-Espinos alliances created in the different continental federations coupled with that infamous “silence of decency” that modern democracy both old and new seems to be infected with. The interesting political-sociology of this support will soon be looked at, continent by continent.

After all the problems experienced under the 21-year “life tenure” of Samaranch, the IOC Sessions of 1999 saw it fit to introduce term-limits for the Presidency and the Executive Board in a desperate move to salvage her international dignity in sports. While quick to adopt parts of the Olympic Charter that helped curtail national sovereignty, the WKF even after 26 years of a Delcourt rule has not seen it fit to introduce term limits for all elected and appointed positions in the organization. The only remaining option for the IOC to “stop the bleeding” of her growing negative image is to also require term-limitations of all member federations and NOCs. The IOC Charter clearly provides for this in requiring that NOC statutes must comply with the Olympic Charter. Why is this policy not being pursued aggressively? If the Presidency of the IOC is now subject to term limits, why not Presidents of NOCs and her member federations? Such term-limits will greatly diminish political corruption from having time to evolve into economic corruption. Time is the enemy here. It is interesting that while the IOC appears to show little regard for national sovereignty vis-à-vis governments, it is reluctant to impose the same policy within the “Olympic family” by requiring NOC Charters to adopt term-limits.

“Presidential Club”

An Inner circle of advisors or confidantes exists around the leadership of all organizations including the most democratic ones. The problem starts when “specialist” karate organizations like the WKF begin to open the “flood-gates” to let in “anybody off the street” to hold pivotal posts and a crony system is established. This appears to have been facilitated in the WKF when strict karate-requirements for candidates were erased from the new 2006 statutes. Good leadership must distinguish between sycophants ever on the lookout for a stage, and karate-qualified expert advisers cum good friends. If I remember, Delcourt was also surrounded by a mixture of qualified expertise and less than savory characters who somehow managed to get the support of their national federations to “hustle” inside this karate movement (that perfume tycoon from Singapore always comes to mind). Espinos appears to have started well surrounding himself with karate-qualified confidantes and then quickly lowered his standards. To ease entry into the WKF-EC, previously required karate-credentials for the top posts were conspicuously omitted from the new 2006 Statutes. This manipulation of the statutes to ease the bringing-in of poorly qualified sycophant friends is a dangerous precedent to set.

The fact of the matter is the trend towards autocratic executive authority has clearly created an exclusive “Presidential Club” of VVIP cronies (with exclusive comfortable seats reserved for them at elite WKF championships) and they in turn have created a “protective zone” for their leader. These members of the Presidential entourage from the EC get pampered with the money extracted from host federations of WKF events (Senior World Championships and Junior & Cadet Championship as well). For the privilege of hosting federations have to pay the WKF Treasury not only an exorbitant “surety” of 40,000 Swiss francs (Article 14.1 as mentioned in WKF Rules, Regulations and Commissions) 6 months before the event but also 20,000 Swiss francs for flight tickets (excluding local transportation and room/board for the duration of the event) of persons designated by the WKF (excluding additional preparatory visit expenses for the Organizing Commission in terms of flight tickets and luxury room/board as per article 14.1 & 14.2 mentioned in WKF Rules, Regulations and Commissions revised in 01/06/05). In return these confidantes begin to engage in the generation of a “personality cult” and exclusivity. The rather visible celebration of the President’s birthday in “song and feast” by cronies, shows poor taste and sends the wrong signal to members for the development a democratic organization. Alienation has definitely set in and created a “we-they” feeling among the general membership. Those admitted

into the President's inner circle become part of his platform of candidates for elections, appointments or co-option. The final coup to protect and ensure the induction of loyal incumbents is Article 10.1 of the new 2006 Statutes, which essentially frees them from a priori national endorsement for election eligibility. This being the case the future is quite predictable. Once the EC is filled up with protégées who last long enough to come under the protection of Article 10.11, long life is assured for the President and "all his merry men and women". The EC of which the President is the "first among equals" is the gateway for the top job, and so selective admission here protects incumbent Presidents. Consequentially the EC has become a "rubber-stamping" branch of approval for the President (crucial decisions reserved for the WKF Congress can be temporarily approved for the President by the EC pending final approval by a future Congress of the WKF), clearly facilitated by being composed of "little people from little countries from far away places".

Power acquired in the few hands of the President and his EC has allowed men and women of modest means to now live it up at and in between WKF events.

The ".Com Doctors" - Karate leadership's desperate quest for respectability?

In the earlier years of modern Japanese karate of the 1970s the karate world was witness to the rampant and shameless proliferation of self-appointed 10th dans. Even though most of them were from very humble educational and professional backgrounds many even ventured into trying their hands at pseudo-philosophy. These days however some karate leaders have gone into the business of buying instant "doctorates" from diploma mill "universities" set up overnight "on-line". These non-accredited ".com" one-room "universities" have mushroomed rapidly all over the world in catering to a dubious clientele wishing instant academic credentials and the respect that comes with it. This mad scramble for dignity has even caught up with people inside the WKF, which is a sad reflection of the desperate efforts of some among us to seek social respectability at any cost. A favorite source of such doctorates in Anglo-Europe appears to be the "one-roomed elite institution of them all" that goes by the name of Dublin Metropolitan University, which has moved her registered offices from Ireland to Limassol, Cyprus, with a London (England) mailing address. Let the "poor souls in search of false respectability" not forget that the 1st female President of the US Olympic Committee (Sandra Baldwin 2000/02) was forced to resign in May 2002 over a false claim to a doctorate she never had. In this case, it is a claim to a dubious "doctorate" that anyone can buy, which amounts to the same thing. The audacity of acquiring such false doctorates is probably based on the belief that if used in public long, loud and often enough, people will accept it and it becomes real.

This sad trend actually surfaced more than 15 years ago in places like Hawaii (Euro-Technical University being the best known there) and Hong Kong (where one source of quick doctorates in "Martial Arts Science" proliferated even among members of a former national governing body of the USA) but this practice is more rampant now in the martial arts world, thanks largely to the proliferation of on-line education. It is thriving in Puerto Rico where I live now.

It is legitimate to question the character of those among us who became willing "victims" of this temptation and continue to want to be leaders of our "Olympic" karate movement. One cannot live a life of deception in private and harbor ambitions of leading an international karate movement such as the WKF in public. People who present false fronts in one place will tend to do this in everyplace. The bottom line is can we entrust the responsibilities of democratic leadership of an international organization such as ours to those who present false educational fronts in their personal lives?

As we said earlier, one can draw an analogy between these new karate charlatans seeking "respect" at any cost, and the old Japanese masters from humble backgrounds who also tried to project themselves as worldly philosophers. In the new world of the ".com doctors" the false posturing of the past is alive and well among younger martial artists as well. While the old masters were for a time well protected from exposure by a tradition of unquestioning loyalty and

poor media scrutiny, their modern counterparts may not enjoy this privilege. What should be of legitimate concern to all of us is that when these people are eventually exposed, they will do damage to the image of the organizations they represent.

2006 – The “Year of New Faces” in the WKF Executive Committee

We see that some new faces have in recent years been brought into the EC by Espinos, namely F. Didier (of France-upgraded from the EKF-EC as sports commissioner to regular WKF-EC member); A. Celik (Turkey-upgraded from EC of EKF), Makarita Lenoa (Fiji-probably a replacement for Australia’s now deceased John Halpin and a gender asset), Dieudonne Okombi (Congo), Rolando Sias (Mexico), Mohd.Paraiso (of Benin, who was left out in late 2008), and Suleymane Gaye of Senegal. It appears that the eternally quiet Mengome (member of the Olympic Committee of Gabon) and “veteran” James Johnson (Canada), both longtime EC members were recently expendable, creating space for new “unknowns from little far away places” that management can politically count on. The appointment of a Fijian woman as the continental representative (replacement for the deceased John Halpin of Australia) of Oceania was a great surprise, as normally the candidate should be from the most active programs of the region, namely Australia and New Zealand. Similarly the African, Asian and Pan-American presence in the EC should also be from the most active national federations and not the most politically expedient ones.

Let us consider a breakdown of EC-members by country and continental region. There is much curiosity as to the composition of the newly formed and statutorily-recognized (Article 2.2 of the 2006 Revised Statutes) Mediterranean Karate Federation (MKF). It appears that it is being kept a secret even after many years of existence. Which are the countries that compose this new continental body that overlaps the 3 existing continental federations of Europe (northern and eastern Mediterranean countries that are EKF members), Africa (southern Mediterranean nations that are members of Union of Federated African Karate-UFAK) and West-Asia (eastern Mediterranean nations like Syria, Lebanon and Palestine that are Asian Karate Federation members)? Can a national federation belong to 2 continental federations? Clearly the creation of the new “out of place” Mediterranean Karate Federation creates this problem of dual representation. Finally who are the office-holders of this “mysterious” continental federation? I suspect that when this list comes out it will be the same familiar names already in-charge elsewhere in the EKF and WKF orbit. The MKF is discussed at greater length in pages that follow.

1. **EKF**- 8 EC members including the President (Spain), Secretary General (Greece) and six others, namely G. Pellicone (Italy); A.Celik (Turkey); Y. Lindqvist (Finland);G. Nordahl (Norway);M. Dinsdale (GB/England) and F. Didier (France)
2. **PKF**- 6 EC members; J.Maanon (Argentina); Carmen Diaz (Venezuela); Rolando Sias (Mexico); Jose Mendez (Puerto Rico); Edgar Oliveira (Brazil); W. Millerson (Neth. Antilles)
3. **UFAK (Africa)** – 4 EC members; B. Cherif (Tunisia); D. Okombi (Congo); S. Gaye (Senegal); M. Paraiso (Benin) was replaced in late 2008 by Mohamed Tahar Mesbahi of Algeria.
4. **AKF (Asia)** - 4 EC members; K.H. Chang (Chinese Taipei) ; J.M. Achiam (Macau-deceased August 2008 and replaced by Xuhui Wang of China);B. Mok (Hong Kong) and K. Hasumi (Japan)
5. **Oceania**-1 EC member; M. Lenoa (Fiji)
6. **MKF**- the big secret?

After some experimentation it appears that those who control the WKF have hit upon the right formula for the composition of the EC to ensure long tenure. The perfect formula may well be to use the pretence of fair geographical distribution and gender equity in selecting “unknowns” from

little “banana republics”. Non-English speaking candidates may be preferred because they will sit quietly, listen and take all orders from above. It may be coincidence but could also be a deliberate design that there are a disproportionate number of EC members from little known places with inactive karate federations, while many of the “giants” of the current WKF scene are left out, like Russia, Germany, Croatia and many other European nations. In Asia perennially karate-active nations like Iran, Kuwait and Malaysia are not represented in the WKF-EC. Instead 3 of the 4 are held by countries from a very small region of East Asia; Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong and Macau (2 are Chinese territories and 1 claimed as such). 3 of the 4 African EC-members are from Senegal, Benin and the Congo, places that are insignificant even in the context of African karate. The new replacement for Benin from Algeria does little to correct the problem. From the Pan-American region, of the 6 EC-members 4 are from the Central-Caribbean region. The USA and Canada with active programs and longtime involvement in the WKF do not have a single EC-member since George Anderson of the US left more than 15 years ago and James Johnson of Canada was moved out of the WKF-EC about 3 years ago but kept around as a member of the Gender Commission.

So why are people from “small far away places” being considered for WKF-EC posts over the many others from important karate-countries? It is a well established fact of social research and political logic of the Machiavellian formula that the loyalty of candidates from “small places” is always more reliable and therefore more useful for the control of organizations by management.

Asian Karate

The Asian karate scene is disproportionately represented in the WKF-EC by tiny territories of China, Macau (until Jose Achiam’s death in Sept.2008) and Hong Kong, as well as the disputed island of Chinese Taipei, while Iran a longtime successful powerhouse of the AKF-WKF competition scene has never held a seat in the WKF-EC since the seventies, nor been appointed to a senior refereeing position. It is interesting to note that the new “phantom” EC member from Hong Kong Bill Mok appeared at his maiden WKF Championship-Congress (appointed as AKF Continental Representative EC-member at WKF-16 of 2004 in Monterrey, Mexico) quite “lost” as an unknown but yet another “honorary life member somewhere”. He did reveal to this writer personally that he was retired from work in Hong Kong, and living in Brisbane, Australia). With this appointment all 4 AKF members of the WKF-EC are from countries of a small region of East Asia (such as Macau, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan), while the rest of Asia remains conspicuously under-represented.

When China “awakes” and takes her rightful place, the “karate world will tremble” but be better for it

In July 2007 the national governing body, the China Karate Association was admitted to the WKF as a provisional member. Soon after Chinese WKF- karate took a first step by competing for the first time at the August 2007 Asian Karate Championships of Malaysia. At the World University Karate Championship of July 2008 in Poland, Li Peng won China’s first ever medal (a bronze) at a world championship. In time China must and will take her proper place in the WKF instead of being poorly represented by tiny Hong Kong and Macau, in terms of representation in the EC and producing a respectable national team that is capable of winning medals at the highest levels. “Unfortunately” this will mean that China will have 3 representations in the WKF (it was until the recent death of Jose Achiam the only country to have 2 seats in the EC of the WKF through Achiam of Macau and Bill Mok of Hong Kong). Neither the Hong Kong nor Macau athletes have ever come close to medal contention at the WKF level, and after so many years of participation (and in Macau’s case in spite of the presence of a salaried Iranian coach) have very few medals even at the AKF level. This poor representation only promises to heap more embarrassment on China in the future, an “original” source of martial arts from which the Japanese karate we practice emerged. The world’s most populous country and a “primary” source of karate is finally a member of the WKF and getting organized to eventually form a truly legitimate national karate federation to produce the world class athletes that it deserves. In a sense China has been

conspicuously absent from this world stage and we were all the poorer for it. This current unusual situation warrants immediate attention by China's sports and political leadership. China proper and not little Macau or Hong Kong should take the lead in representing their national athletic dignity in the WKF, including representation in the EC of the WKF (Xuhui Wang of China was finally co-opted in January 2009). Now that China proper has taken her rightful place and become a member of the WKF (as she did at the 5th World Cadet and Junior Championships of October 2007 in Istanbul), like Great Britain they will have 3 seats, 3 national teams and 3 chances of winning, while the rest of us have only a single seat and chance. This advantage of multiple representations for some must be stopped as it is grossly unfair to the other members of the WKF.

It will not be long before athletes from China proper burst on to the WKF competition scene, given the dedication and discipline shown by both officials and athletes in the other sports which resulted in China winning the most gold medals of any country in the 2008 Olympics including very impressive medal wins in boxing, taekwondo and judo (top 4 in all 3 sports). However, in declaring that "China is a part of the WKF development program" we hope that the WKF leadership has not adopted a patronizing attitude towards a most important historical source of Japanese karate, where the essential ingredients for producing tough fighters soon are already there, namely interest, organization, discipline, national pride and toughness of character. We think that this WKF leadership's time and resources will be better served by focusing on improving the standards of organization and athletic excellence in the "banana republics" as well as other little far away places, not China. What is most important is that China will take some time to scout around for a proper international coach to bring their karate program to the highest of standards.

The subject of fair representation must be addressed seriously by the WKF Congress and pressure brought to bear on the current leadership to effect changes immediately. The inequity of representation in the EC is so blatant. Even Malaysia and some other WKF-AKF active West Asian countries have a better claim for a seat in the WKF- EC than little Macau and Hong Kong. It is widely rumored in Asia that Bill Mok's inclusion in the WKF-EC was actually engineered by the behind the scenes "boss" of the Asian Karate Federation, little Macau's Jose Martins Achiam (that they are both from the little known Goju-ryu off-shoot of karate called Seigokan may explain a lot). Such appointments only help to strengthen political interests within the WKF-EC (even the 16 Congress-elected EC members need to be on the President's election platform to win, while all the other 7 are co-options and appointments by the EC/President). The "customized constitution" allows the President-EC to take liberties and make partisan appointments in the name of correcting gender and geographical imbalances, as well as to fill temporary vacancies that arise in the EC. The President-EC can also manipulate the 6 permanent posts established in the EC for continental representatives. The new statutes also gave them the right to appoint 1 extra candidate, the need for which was never specified. All this freedom to make partisan appointments must be regulated by proper changes in the Statutes by a re-empowered Congress.

Pan-America (South & Central America-Caribbean Islands-North-America)

In the case of the Pan-American region (Pan-American Karate Federation or PKF), the only national federations that deserve seats in the WKF-EC are; Canada, USA, Brazil, Venezuela and Mexico. These countries have very WKF-active national federations that regularly compete in WKF tournaments with "full" delegations. Closer examination reveals that of the above mentioned countries the USA and Canada (James Johnson of Canada was in the EC for many years as the continental representative until 2006, but lost out to Hispanic-American Rolando Sias of Mexico) are conspicuously not represented in the WKF-EC (even though acknowledged as the country with the largest karate population in the world).

The WKF-EC member from the small Dutch Antilles island of Curacao, William Millerson (also 1st vice-president of WKF) may be a fitting exception in some ways, but as almost always staying too

long on the job brings problems with it. Until recent years tiny Curacao boasted a very active and successful WKF-karate program which was at or near the pinnacle of both the PKF and the WKF championships. The Curacao program under Millerson has produced countless EKF and WKF kumite champions (Millerson himself was a fighter-cum coach on many a winning Curacao team, not to mention the Dutch team of the seventies), but alas primarily for the parent-country Holland. This is because young and "raw" Curacao/Surinam fighters go to study in Holland, get proper guidance and end up fighting and winning for that country (some like Millerson, Josepa, Boulbaye and others, have fought for both Holland and Curacao at different times). Included here are a long line of legends like Millerson, Kotsebu, Roethoff, Leeuwin, Josepa, Leito, Boulbaye and countless others(3)*. This veritable "farm" function that the Netherland Antilles serves for the Dutch team has become the "achilles heel" of the Curacao karate program after 2000, and the principal cause of the current decline. Millerson is also the President of the Netherlands Antilles Olympic Committee and in this capacity mingles with the IOC "crowd" of the region and occasionally beyond. With these credentials that he brings with him into the WKF, few can question his rightful place in the EC as the 1st Vice-President, although there is clear opposition to his long tenure in office as President of the Curacao Karate Bond and the Pan-American Karate Federation.

Then there is Carmela Diaz, the grand dame of Venezuelan karate who is a non-karate WKF-EC member and a predicament, because here is a non-karateka who has done wonders managing the Venezuelan national karate program, by first wresting it away from the hands of earlier charlatans with very narrow agendas, and then propelling it to international standards in the hemisphere and beyond. While applauding the national achievements of this possible exception of a non-karateka for EC membership, filling WKF-EC seats with non-karatekas is nevertheless not the precedent to set, except where an emergency impasse is created by relentless in-fighting that requires the presence of a neutral person as a transition. At the world level her inclusion in the EC and more recently also in the Gender-Equity Commission should be as a special exemption to the rule based on exemplary national achievements, given the availability of many other talented ex-female karatekas who are probably "waiting on the sidelines" for a call from Espinos. However, as a member of the well-bonded Hispanic bloc she is also a political asset to Espinos. She is not the only "aberration" as there are also some male members of the EC who have no real karate practice background. Let us not forget that the "great" Delcourt was a judo not karate man even though he tried hard to publish his way out of the dilemma posed by his critics. The leadership of world karate should be in legitimate karate hands, male and female. Then there is Jose Mendez, a relatively long-time PKF-WKF EC member from the little US territory of Puerto Rico with a small and relatively inactive karate program. However he was an active pioneer in the Espinos campaign to unseat Delcourt, helping to marshal the South-American/Caribbean Hispanic bloc behind Espinos. It does not end here. To the surprise of many insiders, at the 2004 WKF meet a "ghost from the past", Luciano Valero of Mexico was suddenly brought into the WKF-EC for a short period only to be replaced by his fellow countryman Rolando Sias. Valero a prominent member of the past WKF Referees Council in the 1980s (together with the likes of Julius Thiry and Tommy Morris) had totally "disappeared" from the karate scene for more than 10 years (he was apparently working in the Dominican Republic), and to the best of my knowledge was not an elected official of the EC of the Mexican Karate Federation at the time of this appointment.

The fact of the matter is that non-karate appointments into the EC will only tend to politicize the WKF further. We have come a long way in internationalizing the WKF by wresting it away from Japanese hands (thanks to Delcourt) and now we must take serious steps to keeping the organization clean of partisan politics.

The Hispanic-Caribbean islands and Latin Americans can always be expected to tow the Espinos line due in large part to their common ethnic heritage and the indisputable "madre Espana" complex that runs deep within the dominant non-indigenous group of "blancos". Even though within the countries that constitute the "Hispanic bloc" there are deep racial prejudices between Blacks/Amer-Indians and the dominant "blancos", they unite against outsiders on the basis of a common language and in the case of the "blancos" a common colonial heritage. These underlying

sentiments are also very strategically nourished by Espinos through WKF-financed visits to the region to solidify this “cosa nuestra” source of bloc-votes, especially come election time. This special “blood-link” is further nurtured through free technical exchanges (such as Spanish coaches sent to the region and local ones brought to Spain on scholarships, to be trained at the National Institute for Physical Education or INEF in Madrid). Yet another recent platform for more ethnocentric social bonding is the biennial Ibero-American karate tournament (the 1st one was held in Tenerife, Spain in 2004 and the most recent in Venezuela in mid 2008) organized by the appropriately named Federacion Ibero-Americano de Karate (FIK) and chaired by the “mother” federation, the Real Federacion Espanola de Karate (RFEK y DA). You can rest assured that bonding here is a most faithful source of bloc votes for Espinos.

What is happening in the WKF movement of the Caribbean-Latin American region is a phenomenon that has happened before within the region’s IOC organization known as ODEPA. The one-vote per country policy gave them the clear majority in the area, a fact that was used by the leaders to dominate the leadership of the Olympic movement in the entire Pan-American region under Vasquez Rana of Mexico. Although the United States and Canada bring home the most medals, they have been sidelined from playing a leadership role by the fact that there are “more of them”; leading to the exercise of a kind of “tyranny of the majority”. As a result, Latin American “banana republics” lead the Olympic movement of the region as ODEPA. The bloc support for Espinos is similarly based on shared ethno-linguistic values, with political implications for the WKF.

It is also interesting to note that many of the national federations of Hispano-America are “one man shows” that in some cases have lasted a “lifetime”. These “little macho men” identify with the “big macho man”, who is smart enough to keep them loyal with posts in the WKF that are “of high value” back home. Some literary sources also remind us that these are political cultures that are based on an ingrained respect for the “caudillo”; the strong macho-type leader. This may well explain why even with the advent of democratic rule and institutions of governance both in Spain and Hispano-America, there appears to be a continued fascination for the benevolent strongman to take charge in all facets of civic life. This may also have something to do with a popular disdain for the paralyzing affects of intense in-fighting in the new democratic era, which is also characteristic of these political cultures.

The truth is Spain manipulates ethnocentrism to suit her needs, not just to be a leader in sports management but especially so in big business. Spain is a EU member with an EU future that has successfully exploited the common ethnic angle vis-à-vis Latin America to suit her commercial interests. This may be “coming to an end” in the economic sector as many left-leaning and/or populist governments have come to power in the continent, who see the inherent logic of capitalism for what it really is, of “going where the money is” irrespective of historical ethnic bonds. In this situation, new capital from countries like India, China, Singapore and elsewhere have recently found a niche in the region. However in socio-cultural terms common ethnocentric orientations appear to prevail and give Spain a continued lease on life as a leader in sports management. In highlighting the case of Ibero-American ethnocentrism we are not ignoring the fact that others like the Arab Karate Union also exist within the WKF, but currently the Ibero-American source of bloc voting strength is clearly the most politically manifest expression of ethnocentrism within the WKF that all challengers have to contend with.

Africa

The African representation in the WKF-EC sad to say appears to be nothing more than “adding color” to this organization and complying with the issue of geographical equity, while ensuring more “yes” votes for the incumbent leadership of the WKF.

“Betrayed”- La Cause

It has been my observation since WUKO-2 of 1972 that there will never be a shortage of candidates from “banana republics” lining up to be “bought” with posts that carry “free-bees” (travel and lodging but also small posts that could be used back home as status symbols). A very personal experience at WUKO-2 Congress in 1972 will forever remain fresh in my mind. As an official delegate of Malaysia, I led the campaign to expel South-Africa from WUKO over her apartheid politics, and to stop the South African team there from competing. I almost lost because many Black African delegates, who were initially “gung ho” behind me, got “bought” with promises of posts from certain WUKO sympathizers of South Africa (the caucus we formed for this purpose had unanimously agreed to expel the South African Federation from WUKO membership and to deny the South African team participation then and in the future). Unknown to me the delegate from a French-speaking West-African country shamelessly accepted the junior post of Assistant Treasurer for allowing the South African team to compete at this tournament. Not only did they compete at this tournament but also at the next one in 1975, which was their last until their re-admission in 1992. In retrospect maybe this was a reasonable compromise, but the way it was done then did not speak well at all for Black African unity. I came away from this experience thinking that this unity is fragile and for the right price always for sale.

Recent developments have further confirmed this. We believe the following karate-active African national federations today are more deserving of seats in the WKF- EC; South-Africa, Egypt, Tunisia, Senegal and maybe even Morocco. Instead the current African EC members are from non-active tiny nations like Gabon (with the eternal and ever-present but silent Mengome who was recently brought back into the EC after he became Secretary General of the Gabon Olympic Committee, only to be “cut” again after a year or more) Congo (D.Okombi of DRC) and until late 2008 Benin (M. Paraiso; thanks to their surrogate son Frenchman Damien Dovy who after retiring from a brilliant career in the French team won some medals for his ancestral home country). The late 2008 under the radar screen appointment of Mohamed Tahar Mesbahi of Algeria is also highly questionable. Most recently (as per the mid-2008 list of elected EC and appointed Commission members posted on the WKF website) yet another unknown A. Solofonirina of Madagascar was brought into the Technical Commission. With due respects, what can he bring to the Technical Commission that someone from a karate power-house like Iran or the many others cannot?

For the good of WKF karate only those African national federations that are active (in terms of the participation and performance of their athletes) should be invited into Commissions or elected into the EC, such as South Africa and Senegal from Sub-Saharan Africa and Egypt, Tunisia, and Morocco from “Arab” Africa. Instead we have Gabon, Benin, the Congo and now Madagascar? On this matter our view may be may be politically incorrect, but we have a higher obligation to call it as it is, which in this case is to “reveal” an already well known fact that candidates from “banana republics” are often for sale and certainly not the best candidates. A leadership that makes such weak appointments cannot have the future of the organization at heart. They are merely preparing the ground for long-term controls.

It appears from the above survey that the inner and outer perimeters of WKF leadership (EC) is stacked with individuals who are partisan “appointments” (the fact is there is little or no difference between elected, co-opted and appointed EC members, for to get into the EC through one of these ways one must be a pro-Espinos candidate and on his platform), rather than capable independent talent good for the democratic growth of the organization. Selection should be based on prior experience in well managed active national federations and not political malleability. Add to this the “KOI factor” of influence in the refereeing system and beyond, and one does not get a positive picture of an organization that represents all our Olympic karate dreams. It is rather evident that “banana republics” from Hispanic America and Africa with weak or no WKF karate programs are far better represented in the WKF-EC than countries such as USA, Germany, Iran, Netherlands, Croatia, Bosnia, Russia and some others, all with far superior organizations and active WKF participation over long years. While France was returned to EC membership in 2007

after a lapse of some years (Francis Didier), Turkey (Aydogan Celik, a non-karateka) was brought in for the very first time the same year.

Glaring as the unjust politics of representation is, all internal discontent has so far failed to translate into a platform of concerted action. It is widely perceived that federations that oppose will be “victimized” in one way or another; such as in the promotion of their referees and the general exclusion of their athletes from “center-stage”. And so “la grande silence” continues among an otherwise “courageous and honorable” karate tradition. It is difficult to understand this silence of karate men and women whose rhetoric is otherwise full of lofty ideals honoring democracy, ethics, fair-play and justice for all, often culminating in grandiose declarations of defending these to the death.

The “Silence of Decency” - No lessons learnt from history?

Has recent history not taught us anything about being silent in the face of autocratic controls? Silence in the face of abuse in a democracy is a form of collusion. Does the German Karate Federation have to be reminded of what silence in the face of totalitarianism can result in, as is also the case of countries that only recently threw off the yoke of similar autocratic communist controls? And what of the great English tradition of democracy and fair-play dating back to the Magna Carta? We hope that the conspicuous silence of the English karate leadership is not a sad echo of the Gladstonian tradition of English foreign policy of yesteryear; captured in those infamous words, “England has no enemies or friends, only interests”. The example set by the WKF leadership of the so called “old democracies” for the new democracies of the old communist bloc cannot be a good one to follow. The implicit suggestion from all this is that there is a place for autocratic rule in the civic life of Western Democracies? It may well be that democracy is the “big lie” that old Western democracies have been selling to countries that have emerged from years of autocratic rule. While on the one hand they brag about their democratic tradition of old and the “sacred” statutes that go with it, deep down they know full well that in daily lives it is the raw human instinct for control that prevails even in their own mature democracies. And what of the Central and South American countries that suffered long brutal years of authoritarian military dictatorships? Has the democratic civic consciousness of Spanish karate leadership not evolved from the brutal and long reign of the Franco regime (and Portugal under General Salazar)? While the vast majority of supposedly decent karatekas from these recently liberated autocracies have kept silent, some other fellow citizens appear to have become quite skilled in the legal manipulation of democratic norms for the benefit of the few. In all earnestness it is only decent to ask of this silent majority to invoke their democratic conscience and voice opposition to autocratic developments of any kind within the WKF, especially when this is taking place in full view. Such inaction by a majority has to be considered a form of collusion. Dante, sickened by such an attitude in his time a long time ago had this to say of an earlier version of decent but silent folks; “ the hottest place in hell is reserved for those who in times of great moral crisis maintain their neutrality ”.

Meanwhile it is imperative that the three key components of the WKF movement, athletes, coaches and referees unionize and thus empower themselves politically.

The Mediterranean Karate Federation (MKF) - case of “double dipping”?

This is a clear case of an “under the radar” creation and approval of a politically motivated new “continental” federation that gives increased political weight to the EKF and those who control it. An MKF can exist legitimately but not as a continental federation, encompassing the 3 continents of Africa, Asia and Europe. Who are the countries that compose this area and why is the structure of the organization being kept a secret? Is it highly probable that they are the same ones that run the EKF and the WKF, plus some docile North African nations that go along with the decisions of their “big brothers” on the other side of the Mediterranean sea? Through this political creation called the Mediterranean Karate Federation, the current Espinos administration stands to

increase political clout within the EKF and the WKF, as they can now bring in more of “their people” into these bodies. Countries like Spain, France, Italy and Greece who are already current power players in the EKF-WKF will benefit even more from this “double dipping”.

If it is argued that the MKF was created because of the IOC and the Mediterranean Games, then we have to create similar regional continental federations for Southeast Asia (SEA Games) and the Caribbean region (the long-held Central-American and Caribbean Games dating back to 1935) among others. It is only fair to ask as to why the Mediterranean Games (the karate program) was not absorbed by the EKF, or better yet shared by the EKF and the African Karate Federation. It is rather odd that while Syria, Lebanon and even Palestine are considered Mediterranean countries and therefore included in the Mediterranean Games, the WKF has seen it fit to place them in the Asian continental federation (while neighbor Israel is a member of the European continental federation). This makes little sense except in terms of Arab-Israeli politics. The formation of this new “continental” federation was a victory for the long term political agenda of Espinos. This new creation will also allow the President and his EC to make more co-options and appointments (such as in the name of increased gender equity, continental representation etc) to increase their base of power. It will allow for all kinds of creative political manipulations concealed in grandiose but misleading declarations. We only ask that independent-minded members and national federations consider the long term implications of this truly strange political creation called the Mediterranean Karate Federation (MKF) that overlaps the 3 existing continental federations of the EKF, UFAK (Africa) and Asian Karate Federation, creating problems of “dual representation. Will current UFAK members Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Egypt now belong to the Mediterranean federation or both? Likewise France, Spain, Italy, Turkey, Israel, Greece, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Albania, Malta and Cyprus belong to the EKF and the MKF? Is this right to belong to 2 continental federations? Will current Asian Karate Federation members Syria, Lebanon and Palestine be forced to choose or become members of both the Asian Karate Federation and the MKF? That this complex issue was not discussed at length is to say the least, surprising. As was expected the excuse was that this is in accordance with IOC regulations. Then as mentioned earlier, why stop here and not allow the others (Southeast Asia and the Central American-Caribbean region) to follow suit? In fact there are many other IOC sponsored regional games that the “IOC-excuse” will qualify for separate regional representation in the WKF. Have we set a precedent in the creation of the Mediterranean Karate Federation that will continue with these others when it is either politically expedient to create them, or when this is demanded legally by the regions concerned?

The over-representation of Great Britain?

For the greater part of the history of WKF tournaments (for all 6 World Cups until the last one in 1997; the World Games, and up to WKF-13 in 1996), the British Isles were represented as one unit, Great Britain (the governing body being known as the British Karate Federation). At WKF-14 in 1998 this was changed to allow for the separate representation of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland (they deserve a place in the Guinness Book of world records for a total of 5, or is it really 4 WKF memberships as it should be, as the British Karate Federation is clearly not listed as a current member of the WKF on their website). Additionally the British Virgin Islands a territory in the Caribbean participates in the Games of the region as an independent entity, which brings the total separate British representation to 6. It was argued by the Anglo-Saxon bloc that managed to push through this change, that representation as Great Britain is only for the Olympics and related multi-sport Games (the IOC-sanctioned ones like the World Games), but for all WKF events they will operate as separate entities. Based on this rule, you cannot have GB and the 4 separate others competing at the same time in IOC-sponsored events such as the World Games, but this is exactly what happened at the World Games between 1981 and 2001. GB and the 4 entities of England, Scotland, Wales and N. Ireland were allowed to compete (in all 5 World Games to date) in violation of IOC policy adopted by the WKF after the 1996 WKF World Championships, even though IOC recognition of the WKF was only finalized in June 1999. To the best of my knowledge this is a first. It has to be GB or the others, depending on if it is an IOC or non-IOC event. Great Britain (that is the British Karate Federation) is clearly not listed as a

member of the WKF on their website (www.wkf.net) to date (August 2008) while England lost her membership in early 2007 because the new governing body Karate England (formed in October 2005) ceased to exist in February 2007 over management irregularities (this after 11 years of active membership as the EKGB). At a time when in all other aspects of the WKF, there is a frenzied effort by the leadership to comply "100%" with the IOC framework wherever possible, the representation of the British Isles as components in the WKF makes no sense. It also gives the British Isles disproportionate voting power within the WKF and the EKF, and their karate population considerably more athletic representation at WKF tournaments. This is unfair to the bigger countries with much larger populations such as the USA, Russia, Brazil and a few others that only have a single vote and representation in the WKF. How this "injustice" has been allowed to continue without question and opposition is a mystery. "Roaming" representation by those WKF members who have multiple memberships must be strictly prohibited, so as to be fair to the other single-member countries. This perceived advantage can spread. Denmark is now encouraged to support territories Greenland and the Faroe Islands to become independent members of the IOC, which will automatically qualify them for WKF membership if they so desire. In fact the Faroe Islands are members of FIFA because of their "autonomous" status vis-à-vis Denmark but Greenland even with "Home Rule" appears to have been denied FIFA membership in an arbitrary fashion. These are some of the discrepancies evident in international sports administration.

It does not make sense that while the Oceania Karate Federation was created as a separate continental organization to strictly comply with the IOC structure (and Australia "forcibly" separated from the Asian-Pacific continental federation of which it was a founder-member) England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are allowed to "roam free" within the WKF and even in the IOC-sponsored World Games. There is a contradiction here that needs to be resolved.

How the British Karate Federation (BKF) a non-WKF member representing "Great Britain," rescued English karate from the 2007 crisis!

This multiple membership of Great Britain in the WKF proved very useful to an English karate scene in disarray after the demise of the Karate England experiment and the automatic loss of WKF membership in February 2007. It appears that "orphaned" English officials and referees were quickly adopted by a resuscitated Great Britain. What is irregular here is the fact that official WKF website records show clearly that Great Britain (represented as the British Karate Federation or BKF) has not been listed as a member of the WKF or EKF for a long time; probably after 1998 when "GBR" was replaced by "England" at WKF competitions. Following the 2007 debacle and the absence of any national federation, England lost her WKF membership. However England's representative in the WKF/EKF-EC Mike Dinsdale appears to have continued unaffected by the paralyzing events in English karate that led to the loss of WKF membership (the English Karate Governing Board/EKGB was disbanded to form Karate England/KE in October 2005, which in turn ceased to exist in February 2007 and led to the formation of the current English Karate Federation in mid 2007). Dinsdale continued as Acting WKF Treasurer but switching from England to Great Britain, even though GBR/BKF was and is not listed as a member of the WKF or the EKF. He was clearly listed on www.wkf.net of 7/4/07 as the Acting Treasurer of the WKF from the GBR (it appears that he was quietly co-opted into the Executive Committee of the British Karate Federation soon after the formation of Karate England and the disbandment the EKGB, as is clear in the letter of welcome by the President of the British Karate Federation. Between 1994 and the establishment of Karate England, Dinsdale wore the England "hat" when serving in the WKF and EKF-Executive Committees. What is peculiar but on record in the 2006 WKF website is that for a time soon after the formation of Karate England he sat in the WKF-EC as from GBR but in the EKF-EC as from England (see www.eurokarate.net as of 29th June 2008). In the most recent WKF list of July 2008 posted on the official WKF website, Dinsdale is shown as having reverted back to being the WKF/EKF treasurer from England, to probably coincide with the return of WKF recognition for England albeit provisional in October of 2007. It makes sense that Dinsdale represent England, as his "career" appears to have started

after the establishment of the EKGB in 1991 and in it (as per his resume on the new English Karate Federation's website he was the General Secretary of the EKGB from 1991 to 1994 when he was mysteriously terminated). On the other hand it appears that he was only appointed into the EC of the BKF/GB in 2006 at the invitation of Terry Connell; a move that now appears to have been made to protect his WKF/EKF posts from the English karate crisis). It appears that Dinsdale's moves from representing England to Great Britain and back to England had more to do with his skepticism for the disbandment of the EKGB and replacement by Karate England than the fact of England's loss of WKF membership in early 2007 (because his move from England to GB appears to predate the loss of WKF membership). Both the disbandment of the EKGB and the fall of her replacement Karate England have been good for Dinsdale's climb back to becoming the Treasurer of the WKF.

The authors were surprised to discover from reliable sources in England that Mr. Dinsdale does have a mysterious but serious blemish from the past. He was for a time "banished for life" by the EKGB for something that had to do with his role in the hosting and administration of the 29th EKF championships of 1994 in Birmingham, England. This rather severe indictment was later rescinded and Dinsdale re-admitted into the EKGB. There is concern among English and other karate circles privy to this blemish, as to whether this will affect the performance of his new duties as the WKF Treasurer.

Our apologies for any confusion generated in tracking the elusive Dinsdale representation in the WKF/EKF even though for some the "detective-work" tracking the man who kept "moving around" representing first England, then Great Britain, and back again to England most recently has been "fun". Not only did Dinsdale "save himself" but also English karate during a most difficult time (as mentioned above it appears that Dinsdale "converted" to the Great Britain label very soon after the EKGB was disbanded and Karate England formed, as if to protect himself from the uncertainties of the new organization). All these successful moves on his part were possible only due to the well known link between Dinsdale and Espinos. However the "facilitation" and acceptance of Dinsdale's shifts may have seriously compromised accepted norms and ethical standards. It is unheard of that someone from a provisional member country be allowed to become a WKF/EKF EC member; but as so much has been altered in the statutes to suit partisan needs of leadership in recent years that "anything" is now possible. After all, thanks to article 10.11 of the Statutes suddenly orphaned EC members (like when they lose national endorsement or in the case of Dinsdale the national federation is disbanded) can now continue their term in office with a 2/3-EC approval vote, even though article 10.1 of the 2006 WKF Statutes clearly stipulates that provisional members are ineligible for elective office. Some of us are also curiously watching to see if as a provisional member of the EKF and WKF England is allowed to vote before their time such as at WKF-19 of Tokyo 2008 or whenever voting takes place (article 5.9 denies provisional members voting rights). It appears that there is also an additional problem that needs to be resolved before the new English Karate Federation can claim full legitimacy. They appear not to have the WKF required HSA (Highest Sports Authority) or National Olympic Committee recognition, and so may only remain a probationary member ineligible to vote in any EKF/WKF meetings until both the 2-year probation period and HSA/NOC requirements are met. Also while "switching hats" between an England and Great Britain may be a "harmless" ethical issue, passing off Great Britain as a WKF member when records indicate it was not and is not, may have legal implications.

Only a few countries can expect to enjoy the privilege of multiple representation (of 175 members, the 5 potential abusers being China with Hong Kong and Macau; USA with Puerto Rico, Guam, Virgin Islands and her Pacific Ocean territories etc; France with Guyane, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Holland with Curacao, Aruba etc), thanks to which the "homeless" can always have a second chance. It is clear that multiple representations serve more than one unfair but useful purpose for some members of the WKF. Before more "abuses" occur this issue must be dealt with, as there is clearly something unjust about multiple-representation.

The case of excessive representation by Great Britain, China, USA, Holland and France merits an examination of WKF Statutes relating to membership. Article 5.5 says;” only 1 national federation per country shall be allowed and article 5.4 reads;” a country is an independent state recognized by the International Community” (as does Article 31 Chapter 4 of the Olympic Charter on National Federations). None of these “countries” accepted as such by the WKF in her 2006 Revised Statutes qualify for UN membership as independent countries, and therefore the WKF’s authorization of the practice of multiple representation to “non-nation states” clearly appears to be inappropriate and confusing. If the many French overseas territories of la Guyane, Martinique, Guadeloupe, St. Martin and her Pacific territories such as New Caledonia and Tahiti with full representation in the French Parliament are considered admissible into the WKF by definition, the list will be endless and in favor of the former colonial powers. Some of these territories are permitted to compete only at the regional and continental levels but not at the world level of competitions. Why stop here and is this limited opportunity legal if taken to the Court of Arbitration for Sports (TAS/CAS) or elsewhere? Fear of sentiments of autonomy and maybe even independence may well be at the root of this strange practice?

Political-culture and leadership

Research in political sociology is quite clear about the inherent struggle between the raw human instinct to dominate and the democratic needs of society. In this scenario the political culture (the result of socialization under political systems over time) of leaders we choose is very important. A candidate from an autocratic political history is more prone to the temptations of excessive controls, than one who hails from a long tradition of liberal democracy. This is a reason why people of many former authoritarian societies appear unable to handle democracy in the short, medium and sometimes even the long run. In these new democracies one notes that there is a propensity for the choice of strong father-like or “caudillo” leadership, not only in political but also civic life. Political sociologists have observed this “syndrome” especially acute in Latin societies and their love-hate relationship with machoman “El Caudillo”, but it is also prevalent in parts of Afro-Asia, the ex-Communist bloc, and the Arab world. Organizations seeking leadership respectful of democratic practices from top to bottom would be wise to select such a profile from mature democratic political cultures.

A political culture characterized by the conspicuous “silence of decency” reflected in a rather docile and unquestioning membership may well be largely responsible for routine incursions on democratic practices of civic life, reflected in the management of sports in these countries. The truth is that this is a problem not just reserved for the WKF. Within the WKF this malady afflicts both small and large federations. Both, the “mighty” FFKDA (French federation) and the English governing bodies have in recent years been embroiled in bitter in-fighting. Within the FFKDA the in-fighting is between Francis Didier the incumbent President who is referred to by his detractors as “le petit Napoleon”, and those who feel that the 2005 FFKDA election was “stolen” (French court ordered elections to be re-held, the details of which can be read on the internet website cdkf2005.free.fr). Almost every national karate federation is infected with this autocratic syndrome, some more than others. One is almost tempted to draw the conclusion that karate training may inherently tend to foster an authoritarian mentality in most people, even those socialized over a lifetime in a democratic society with democratic values. That mature Western European democracies can produce such authoritarian tendencies in their karate leadership is disturbing, and may well be testimony of the claim by many that karate practice fosters an autocratic syndrome. Thus it appears that democratic forces everywhere must be ever vigilant of encroachments to democratic values resulting from a basic human instinct to dominate that appears exacerbated by the martial discipline of karate training. The “silence of decency” is unquestionably at the root of this problem, while filial loyalty required of karate students from the teacher can only add to this predicament. As many have said often enough, “democratic values and practices must be deliberately defended from the ever-present evils of autocracy”. The Lebanese poet Gibran alludes to this sad “silence of decency”, which is clearly not a new problem (Khalil Gibran in Broken Wings – section on the Hand of Destiny).

“He is one of the few who come to this world and leave it without harming any one, but people of that kind are usually miserable and oppressed because they are not clever enough to save themselves from the crookedness of others”.

Decent folks preoccupied with being friends with everybody must surely also be aware that they may have failed to live a truly honest fuller life along the way. More importantly, “by not clearing the ground”, they have also failed to prepare a better future for their children.

The continued silence of members at large in the face of clear abuses of democratic procedures by the management of the WKF leads me to conclude by asking a larger logical question concerning what many see as an inherent contradiction between a karate code of conduct based on rigid controls, and the universal democratic practices of transparency, accountability and equality, as we all know it today. Is there not a basic contradiction between karate-do and democratic values? Why is the highest authority in the WKF, the Congress of national federations so helpless in the face of blatant encroachments on her sovereignty? How is it possible that 175 member national federations are allowing themselves to be “disenfranchised” by a few, without any opposition? Is there an inherent contradiction between the karate code of conduct and democracy?

This autocratic trend within the WKF leads me to open a discussion on a larger issue of concern to many insiders for many years, that of the uneasy relationship between the karate way (do) and the principles-practice of democracy as we understand it today. In fact one could go even further and say that there is a fundamental contradiction between karate and democracy, one that can only be resolved through radical concessions of the controlling tendencies inherent in the karate ideology by those who practice it. The public face of karate is characterized by much talk of humility, fraternity and the pursuit of justice (code of Bushido etc) but very little of this is translated into actual practice, both in the dojo and in the management of organizations. There is little that is democratic about the karate way (do), but a lot about controls. Every facet of the karate tradition, especially relations between teacher and student as well as among students of different levels, is based on a rigid hierarchy of unconditional and unquestioning respect for seniority. No student can walk past a sensei without bowing to him even in inappropriate settings. This is especially ingrained in the minds of Japanese karatekas, and even expected of non-Japanese ones from Japanese instructors, as a sign of a show of respect. The height of this sometimes comical protocol is to watch members of the Japanese national team pausing to bow to their drunken officials at the host-hotel bars; at every world karate championships. While such practices may be more pronounced in the Japanese karate tradition, the authoritarian control mentality that this tradition established does appear to pervade leadership style and behavior among even Western karate leaders. Manipulations of the democratic process to suit partial agendas is rampant in the majority of national karate federations of both the old-world democracies of Western Europe, the developing nations of Africa, Latin-America-Caribbean , Asia and now, the new Europe.

Due in part to this conservative right-wing bushido tradition of controls there appears to be a natural progression towards authoritarianism in karate organizations. It is now known that masters of all forms of martial arts eagerly responded to the call of the Emperor in Fascist Japan’s militaristic designs for the rest of Asia (WUKO-FAJKO’s honorary President Ryoichi Sasakawa was officially labeled as a Class 1 War Criminal by the Allies after WWII, but thousands of lower-rung Japanese martial arts masters escaped this dragnet of conviction and public humiliation-see A. Jennings Lord of the Rings). Japanese martial arts emerged “clean and noble” from the ravages of WWII even though the link between the budo arts and Japanese military-fascism was firmly established. The WKF is no exception to authoritarian developments within, both when it was led by Easterners and now by Westerners. It is for this reason that within the WKF democratic principles and procedures must not only be clearly defined but always defended. Anything short will tend to benefit the authoritarian tendency that we all have within us.

As suggested earlier, all autocratic trends within the WKF are merely the logical extensions of similar management practices at the national federation level. In most third world nations and

many mature democracies national karate federations are led by “tin-can autocrats” who are nothing less than “arrogant SOBs with no other platform for show in life”.

The once “mighty” Nederland Karate Bond (3rd in team kumite at WKF-1975; 1st in 1977; 2nd in 1988; 3rd in 1990 and winners of countless individual medals) that produced legendary fighters like Millerson, Kotzebu, Leeuwin, Roethoff, Josepa, Leito, Senff, and the greatest of all female kumitekas Guus Van Mourik, is now run by a “dad, mum and son” team, not dissimilar to the “Mr. and Mrs. Smith” show of the USANKF until October 2006 when the new management under Roger Jarrett took over.

The Italian karate federation and FIJKAM the parent-body member of the Olympic Committee has been under “brotherly leadership” for a long time. It must be said however that the Pellicone brothers Giuseppe and Matteo appear to be providing the kind of leadership that produces results and quells criticism. Under the Pellicone leadership the Italian karate team returned home triumphant from WKF-18 (October 2006) in Tampere (Finland) finishing in 1st place with 5 gold medal wins. They also excelled at the recent 5th World Junior & Cadet Championships of October 2007 in Istanbul by winning 3 golds-3 silvers and 4 bronzes. Together with Spain and Germany they have also prevented a cleaner sweep of medals by the new countries of East and South-eastern Europe at for example the 2007 and 2008 EKF seniors, as well as the 2007 EKF Junior/Cadet event in Trieste. It is difficult to argue with such success, and as they say world-wide; “if it works why fix it”. In third-world countries such control means access to prized free travel and small scale monetary benefits, even when they are often weak participants at WKF tournaments. Often these delegations bring few or no athletes but always more officials in hot pursuit of a week’s good life. Similar developments appear to be in store for the inner core of WKF management that many call the “Club”. They appear to be enjoying free travel and the best of host hotels (it is for this reason that countries wishing to host a WKF championship must make available to the WKF a large number of free hotel rooms, in addition to the Swiss francs 40K advance “cash” surety deposit and the 20,000 Swiss francs for free plane tickets for the WKF elite) at every WKF sanctioned event, while dreaming of a day when Olympic inclusion of karate will bring them the greater luxuries they deserve.

Does political history determine an autocratic predisposition?

A predisposition for authoritarian management style among karate leaders is often shaped by a historical legacy of dictatorship and a political culture of subservience. Even today in many parts of the Hispanic world, the “peon” mentality of subservience to the “caudillo” or “patron” is a sublime but strong influence on social behavior. A political culture based on such a legacy tends to respect the strong “macho”-type leader even as he tramples upon all their basic democratic rights. In the case of the Hispanic-American national federations, sublime deference to this tradition from “madre Espana” may also explain the predisposed support for Antonio Espinos, especially in the face of perceived potential Anglo-Saxon challenges from the USA and Europe. There is a long history in Hispanic-America of “patron-peon” relationships in civic society especially under colonial rule. Having moved closely in the WKF karate circles of Hispanic America since the early 1980s, I sense that deep within them is a strong reverence for all things from madre Espana, which is a lot more pronounced among the “blanco” population than the indigenous people. This underlying sentiment reinforced by a common language and history is probably being taken advantage of by Espinos and the Spanish Karate Federation to serve their political agendas in the WKF. In the words of one longtime WKF observer; “During the Delcourt years, everything was French, now everything is Hispanic”. This self-serving political strategy is rather ethnocentric and counter to the universal philosophy of brotherhood preached that is inherent in the modern karate and Olympic traditions.

One evening (7/28/07) I was amused watching a Link television (www.linktv.org is a much smaller network that is trying to provide American viewers with a different point of view than mainstream networks like CNN and Fox News) program called the ‘Latin Pulse’ on human rights violations and autocracy in Hispanic America. The Hispanic host asked this question of his eminent

Hispanic guests. "Is the Caudillo phenomenon and autocracy in our DNA"? Social profiling although controversial can be a tool that says a lot about a people's essence, in terms of their response to basic issues such as leadership, the propensity for social cohesion, the degree of nationalism and the resolution of conflicts, among other kinds of mass social behavior. Why are some societies cohesive and others divisive and thus less able to undertake communal projects? While envy and power may well be a principal driving force in most societies, in Hispanic America this appears like an art form and a *raison d'être*. We think social profiling based on history and culture is a legitimate way of explaining certain kinds of group behavior, whether based on race, religion, nationality or ethno-linguistic factors. Well known social scientists have engaged in social profiling as a tool to understand the unique behaviors of certain societies. It is only recently that this tool has acquired a bad name for being misused by some segments of law enforcement in the USA against the Black community. So we cannot claim to be unique in the use of history and political culture to understand and explain what appears to be a greater propensity for the generation of autocratic leadership behavior in Hispanic societies than in others.

As stated earlier, this trend towards authoritarian leadership and management in karate circles is the direct consequence of human control instincts shaped by political history. The conspicuous "silence of decency" also fits into the development of this equation. It appears to us that "decent karatekas" who are clearly in the majority, have chosen to remain silent and work with authoritarian forces wishing to reign supreme. This phenomenon appears to have become the nemesis of representative democracy and the institutions of civic life within. How else can one explain that while "decent" people are almost always in the majority, the authors of evil designs appear always to triumph? The abandonment of responsibility by decent folks to prevent autocratic designs and practices is the principal cause of the dilemma facing democracy within the WKF.

Exorbitant tournament-hosting expenses, a "take-all policy" and equipment endorsement for profit.

Some other established practices of the WKF leadership may also be perceived by members as irregular, unethical and maybe even corrupt. The first has to do with the exorbitant expenses involved in the application for hosting a world championship, and the endorsement of equipment for profit. The host-country has to literally "bribe" the EC with not just an advance monetary deposit or "surety" of Swiss francs 40K, but also 20,000 Swiss francs (a hidden charge for hosts not listed in the recently made public WKF-fees for 2009) for airfare of select WKF officials (used at the discretion of the President to essentially buy the loyalty of EC members), plus free room and board at elite host-hotels (this is excluding additional airfare/room and board expenses for members of the Organizing committee to check on progress 6 months before the event to be hosted). It is sad that host countries line up to organize world tournaments and the money from their hard work is used by the President to purchase the loyalty of EC-members. The second issue has to do with the mandatory requirement that only equipment sold by WKF recognized companies such as Adidas corporation (such as kimonos, gloves and protective-gear such as the new controversial face-mask) will be allowed at official WKF tournaments (companies wishing to sell their products at WKF events as official distributors must pay an exorbitant annual fee of about \$US10, 000 and as of end 2008 there were 29 of them paying a total of almost \$300,000 for this privilege). Much cheaper and identical gloves from other manufacturers are prohibited, adding further financial strain on poorer countries and athletes. As mentioned earlier, the registration fees of athletes for WKF competitions have also become exorbitant (as per 2009 rates, 110 Swiss francs for individual events; 180 for male kumite team event; 140 female team and 120 for male/female team kata), as have the fees for referee certification. Then there is money from the sale of black belt ranks. Collection from a single senior world championship (essentially from competition, referees exams and sale of Black Belt ranks) such as at Tokyo 2008 can amount to more than 120,000 Euros (with about 110,000 Euros coming only from the competition fees of 888 athletes). This money is the sole property of the WKF treasury. After all the hard work, little or nothing is left for the host-country, except a meager share of the food concession stands and spectator fees. At the 44th EKF Seniors of Zagreb 2009 close to 50,000

Euros were collected from the competition fees alone of 479 athletes (plus money from referees for exams, license renewal etc).

The “Mega Game” of income for these guys is from the World Junior and Cadet Championships where there are a lot more categories and therefore athletes participating because it is by age and weight and as such there are also many team kumite and kata events. Here by current reliable guesstimates they take home close to 200,000 Euros from a single tournament.

The smallest amount collected solely from athletes fees are from the EKF Championships for Regions (about 15,000 Euros for the 2008 meet). Given that the same exclusive group controls the leadership of both the WKF and the EKF, all monies coming in from multiple WKF and EKF events go into the “same coffer”. So you can imagine how much money is being made for the exclusive use of the leadership at all WKF, EKF and Mediterranean federation events. The fact is a few at the top “walk away” with a lot of money in the name of the WKF while bringing little or no benefit to the organization, such as bringing much needed financial relief to athletes and referees burdened with exorbitant expenses to keep this movement of “Olympic” karate going.

There is clearly anger at what is perceived to be an effort to financially squeeze athletes, officials and their national federations into supporting what is increasingly evident as the lavish life-style of WKF leadership (Espinosa's per diem and WKF-issued credit card expenses should be interesting reading if properly revealed). However the blame must be placed squarely on the shoulders of national federations “lining up” to host world championships at great effort and expense only to surrender all monies generated to the WKF central office. Additionally we do not understand why host federations are so “fearful” of the WKF taking away hosting rights at any time during preparations for the event or for that matter why countries even bother to organize a world championship for “nothing in return”. On the contrary deep gratitude to the host organizers is in order for working so hard to making and giving away big money to the WKF. The WKF leadership in awarding a national federation hosting rights is not doing them a favor, because it makes big and easy money from this award on the backs of the hard work of the host-federations. It is fair to say that in this equation if anybody should be fearful it is the WKF leadership, that something could go wrong with this lucrative source of income. Being that the same group of Espinosa leads the EKF as well, this conclusion also applies here.

One would think that any money-sharing arrangements between the WKF and host national federations will be clearly stipulated somewhere in the WKF Statutes or Regulations, but they are not (WKF fees for 2009 is provided as appendix). In fact it is not even clear if the current unfair practice of a “WKF take-all” policy was ever approved by the Congress, the highest WKF authority.

Exclusive “club membership” and other forms of elitism encouraged

At issue here is that organizations must exist to serve members, and athletes must always be the first priority of sports organizations. After nearly 40 years of existence, there is more than ever a grave need to “democratize” the entire structure and process of the WKF in order to regain the confidence of the members at large. The politics of manipulation of the willing and intimidation of the rest must be brought to an end. Now that we have lost the Olympic-inclusion game and are thrust in the company of unimportant “pariah” sports of World Games infamy (such as dancing, fly-fishing and boules among other ridiculous sports) we cannot afford to ferment discontent and discord from within over the lack of democratic inclusion and transparency.

In this regard even what may appear as a “small” issue such as the creation by Espinosa at WKF 2000 in Munich of VVIP tags for cronies and karate elites will only tend to create more alienation from the general membership and play into the hands of rivals looking to drive yet another wedge between the WKF and the IOC. There is no place for exclusivity and a sense of petty elitism within the leadership of democratic organizations, much less an international sporting federation recognized by the IOC. In karate we are all “brothers”. Even dan grades must not be flashed in

peoples faces. It is the duty of a democratic leadership to refrain from creating a “we-they” environment.

To add to the theme of author Jens Weinreich of sports corruption fame, senior officials of sports federations like the WKF are starting to behave like U.N. diplomats or heads of states and expecting to be treated as such by the general membership, especially national federations. In time they hide behind a façade of exclusivity often created and buffered by cronies. This is usually a deliberate design to enhance the aura of mystery of the leader they support grow to such a level that eventually people perceive him to be untouchable, thus clearing the way for abuse and corruption. Then the organization begins to be “engineered” to serve partisan interests and the deterioration of civic democracy begins. More importantly peoples trust in democracy begins to wane because as Weinreich so astutely observes “in many federations there is almost no democratic culture, but instead only “family values” of the kind described somewhere by FIFA-boss Joseph Blatter.

The 2006 WKF Constitution has made us “world champions” in the suppression of national sovereignty vested in the Congress of the WKF

A brief survey of the IOC Constitution as well as that of the International Federations of some other established Olympic Sports clearly reveals that the WKF in adopting the 2006 Revised Statutes, may well have become the “champion” of them all in the omission of statutes protecting the supreme authority of the Congress representing the sovereignty of national federations. Even the source ‘culprit”, the Charter of the IOC is careful about pushing the NOCs too far in their general deprivation of national authority. It is for this reason that what is probably the most radical change coming out of the IOC structure ever, of term-limits for the President and the Executive Board has never been enforced on NOCs. Then there is FIFA, the giant IOC member whose President is all powerful in public view, but ever mindful of the power of the vote that national federations can exert. A recent case may affirm this. Even though FIFA President Blatter publicly supported South Africa’s candidacy to host the 2006 World Cup, Germany the pick of the Executive Committee of FIFA won out. Yet another example is that of AIBA (International Amateur Boxing Federation), an important IOC member which Constitution clearly requires that all candidates for elections must have the endorsement of their national federations, contrary to the Olympic Charter. IOC and non-IOC recognized international sports federations albeit grudgingly maintain some semblance of a balance of power system respectful of member federations. The revised 2006 WKF Statutes on the other hand appears to have taken everything that smells of national sovereignty away. This is clearly a major step backwards for the democratic management of international Olympic sports karate that will always remain a thorny issue because infringements of national rights cum identity are emotional issues that never go away.

Ethno-centrism encouraged?

Karate and sports in general share common ideals that are universal and breaking barriers is an inherent part of it. Unfortunately in the pursuit of political gains rivals resort to the use of any and all perceived advantages. To win at any cost by resorting to the subtle use of primordial appeals such as family, race, ethnicity, language and religion has become “fair-play”. This appeal to and manipulation of a common cultural history or rather ethnicity appears to have already been exercised by the current leadership of the WKF under Spaniard Espinos to gain loyal support of the Hispanic federations as a reliable source of bloc-votes for his agenda. While it is not the only expression of ethnocentrism in the WKF world, for now it is by far the largest and most politically empowered bloc under the Espinos administration.

As mentioned earlier, the Hispanic karate world appears to have clearly lined up “solidly” behind Espinos in support of “one of their own”. After the accession of Espinos to the WKF Presidency in 1998 this valuable link was strengthened further through the implementation of programs. The Spanish Karate Federation engaged in a technical support scholarship program with the karate

federations of all of Spain's former colonies (in the Caribbean, Central and South America) and in the process have established a support network that proved very useful for the Espinos campaign of 2004. These exchanges culminated in the establishment of the Federacion Ibero-Americano de Karate (FIK is headquartered in Madrid, Spain). The 1st biennial Ibero-American Karate Championships was held in Spain in 2002 in which 12 countries participated (the 2nd was held in Mexico and the 3rd in Venezuela in 2008). Until his recent death in January 2009 the President of FIK Faustino Soria was also the President of the Spanish federation, Real FEK y DA. The Hispanic bloc-vote is clearly the most loyal source of support for Espinos's causes and as such very crucial at WKF elections. Members of this loyal caucus have been well rewarded to pivotal positions in the EC by always being included in the Espinos platform or "plancha" as they say in Hispanic America. To keep this support alive, Espinos makes official and unofficial visits to the area, while fellow Spaniard Faustino Soria contributed his share for this political configuration as President of the Ibero-American Karate Federation.

Although many will consider such support a normal reality, especially given the precedent already set a long time ago in the Hispanic control of ODEPA (Pan-American Olympic Committee), it is nevertheless sad that these federations have become willing pawns in partisan political schemes of the WKF. The fact is in many of these countries sitting on the EC of the WKF is a passport to free travel and other benefits received from their own governments and national Olympic committees. For this reason WKF posts are desperately sought after; a lot more than in Europe and the wealthier parts of Asia. There are growing signs of antipathy from the non-Spanish world of the WKF for what is clearly a solidarity based on ethnocentrism that is without a doubt the most solid base of support for Espinos within the WKF. While Espinos also has strong support from Europe, Africa and Asia, this is based on political alliances for mutual benefit and not primordial ties and therefore a lot more risky and less dependable.

This large ethnocentric Hispanic power base is uniquely an Espinos era phenomenon. Frenchman Delcourt obviously could not qualify for any ethno-political base; not even from francophone Africa; a fact that definitely played a crucial role in the ease with which the Espinos campaign defeated Delcourt's political base of support in the campaign to oust him between 1994 and 1998. As mentioned earlier while Hispanic ethnocentric cohesion is currently the most politically potent bloc-force it is by no means the only expression of such sentiments within the WKF. Unfortunately it appears that even more formal ethnocentric forces are being formed within the WKF such as the Arab Karate Union, probably encouraged by Espinos and his Hispanic bloc. Iran went a step further in recently hosting an international tournament for Islamic universities (May 2007-see the WKF website-www.wkf.net for more information on this). A formal Pan-Islamic karate organization may not be too long in the making. Even when the line between nationality and ethnicity is blurred in mono-racial countries it is best to discourage karate events based on any semblance of race, ethnicity and religion, given the many serious problems caused to contemporary societies by these issues. However if this is not possible, then the existence of many such unions is better than just one, in the interest of the proliferation of democratic coalition politics intended to enhance political reach by those who do have enough now. Even pan-ethnocentric unions may in some cases "duplicate" existing regional karate federations, they will provide valuable leadership experience for those who are kept out of these regional federations by the same few people who monopolize all the positions in them. So the current WKF leadership's total monopoly of posts "everywhere" may spawn conditions conducive for the emergence of more ethnocentric karate organizations everywhere. Under these circumstances this may be a necessary evil.

The Hispanic ethno-centric power-base is well established in the Olympic movement of the Pan-American region. Hispanic NOC's have long since united solidly under the leadership of multi-millionaire businessman Vasquez Rana of Mexico to dominate the leadership and management of the Pan-American Olympic organization (ODEPA) for decades, even though the USA and Canada bring home most of the Olympic laurels for the region. This is essentially taking advantage of their majority presence and voting strength, which has enabled them to engage in a kind of "tyranny of the majority". The bottom line is that Spain has manipulated ethnocentric

support from Latin-America for her own political and economic gains. The truth is the future of Spain is with Europe and the North-American economic system. Ultimately the Espinos agenda in the WKF will depend on the strength of his European and Asian alliances, with loyal support from the Hispanic bloc of countries.

Europe & EKF

Europe is a different situation where the reasons for support of Espinos may be more based on politics than elsewhere. The fact that Antonio Espinos emerged at the right place at the right time with the right karate and educational credentials had a lot to do with his initial attraction as a prime pan-European candidate. European karatekas were bored of a state of acute malaise after 26 years of the Delcourt administration and angry at his failure to accomplish the dashed dreams of Olympic recognition. Additionally the karate leaders of the “new” ex-communist nations of the EKF felt less loyalty to Delcourt and were easily sold on new promises for the EKF/WKF in the foreseeable future. The vigorous campaigns of one man from the region, George Yerolimpos, was important in lining up support for Espinos from this part of Europe after the glasnost politics of liberation and creation of many new countries from among the Soviet Republics, many of them of Slavic background. Yerolimpos, the General Secretary of the WKF/EKF as well President of the Balkan and Southwest Karate Federations must be credited with rallying support for Espinos among these new nations. It is his work and relentless campaign that even today ties together for Espinos the important areas in the WKF of the ex-communist bloc, the Euro-Arab nations of the entire Mediterranean, and to a certain extent even parts of Western Asia. He is the link between Eastern, Western and Southern Europe for Espinos and serves as his principle “trouble-shooter” as well with Arab federations of the Mediterranean region and beyond. His usefulness was tested in Tunis at the 2001 Mediterranean Games Karate Championships. It was his work after the near riot incident of Moroccan fans that calmed Arab anger directed at the Espinos leadership, one that had the potential to spread throughout the Arab karate world. The strategy of linking together the federations of the new countries of Europe definitely brought greater cohesion and power to the Espinos leadership in the WKF/EKF.

The time is now for a Slavic Karate Federation

We have always felt that the Slavic challenge has been underrated and has the potential to become the most important bloc within the EKF and thereby the WKF. The fact is these are “new” countries struggling to make their political presence felt on the international scene against a legacy of divisions and conflicts that has popularly come to be known as “Balkanization”. For now it appears that within the WKF they have been divided by the powers in place; but as more of them become EU and seasoned EKF members they will enter center stage and realize their strength in numbers in areas such as international sports leadership as well. What the Slavic countries of the EKF need is a base of unity that legitimately keeps “outsiders” away, such as a Slavic Karate Federation with her own biennial championship. Both the Balkan and South West Karate Federations do not serve their principal interests given that they are “outsider” led and controlled for essentially a WKF political agenda. After about 1996 the Slavic nations produce the best fighters and great referees. They merely need a toping of political cohesion in the form of a viable organization to back up their good “punches and kicks” with brave new ideas for a proper re-organization of the WKF structure to save it from the hands of small-group tyranny. Given that there is an Arab Karate Union and more importantly Espinos has his own Ibero-American Karate Federation (the “barrio bloc” or FIK), it is only appropriate that the Slavic nations have theirs. We sense a lot of frustrations for the EKF and WKF within Slavo-sphere and feel that given these are smart people with a great potential base of unity, we are confident that they will soon organize to rise to the challenge within the EKF and WKF. This is a great way for these countries to empower themselves and be in a better position to form larger alliances with other pan-karate unions like the Arab Karate Union for greater representation and political empowerment within the WKF-EC.

As alluded to earlier in this chapter there is some speculation that Espinos and Tommy Morris may actually have an “understanding” whereby the latter agrees to manipulate the global

connections of KOI in favor of Espinos in exchange for tolerance of the WKF-KOI conflict of interest situation. Mr. Morris has actually strengthened his position in the new system of an elected Referees Commission by getting loyalists elected to it. It is rather puzzling that with such a plentiful supply of senior referees this Commission is largely composed of relative "newcomers". Whatever happened to the countless other more experienced referees from all parts of Europe, especially the former Yugoslavia? This bias of getting junior referees elected over proven veterans into the Referees Commission is one that is too obvious to be missed and yet another indication of the free rein permitted to Morris by the WKF leadership.

So far the Espinos-Morris pact within the WKF appears to be mutually beneficial and working well for both. Even though KOI's global strength could pose a threat in the future, Espinos appears unwilling to "clip his wings" now, content with the knowledge that as an EC-appointed RC Chairman Morris will always be vulnerable and under control. It appears that for now Morris is allowed free rein over the Referees Commission and the KOI-WKF conflict of interest ignored. This arrangement appears to be sustaining Espinos well at the helm of the WKF. The resignation of Morris in 2010 and his replacement by an "unknown" young protégée Con Kassis from Australia appears to be a compromise worked out between Morris and Espinos to the benefit of both.

Big egos that will never make it on Coca Cola commercials

We find it only proper to end this discussion on karate, democracy and the philosophy of leadership with a commentary on the almighty ego that so dominates the karate environment that we have experienced for over half a century. We would like to begin by confessing that there is no attempt to absolve ourselves from having been a part of this "ego trip". We have witnessed the very humility they preach as teachers blatantly trampled upon in dealings between officials at karate events. Everyone (including athletes from some elite teams) walks around weighed down by an egotistical attitude that somehow they are more important than the next guy. Athletes and officials from the elite karate nations often tend to be aloof at world meets, as if by tacit but official design (there are a special few who do not fit this mould). Friendship among members at large is not as open as it should be, and it has been commented that many elite officials, referees and athletes strut around like peacocks. This is a reflection of a tradition of hypocrisy that unfortunately has a long history. It is a rather curious fact that this essentially Asian legacy appears not to have been forsaken by the supposedly open-minded karatekas of the West, and instead in some cases there has been blind devotion. The words of a Japanese observer Mitsusuke Harada says it well; "when I look at the people in karate, I don't see too many gentlemen". He goes on to say; "why did karate create this kind of personality, or is it that this kind of personality is attracted to karate".*(4) Why is the legendary coach-fighter Dusan Dacic no more a part of the winning Serbia-Montenegro team that he helped develop (8 medals at the 1998 EKF seniors, including 3 golds)? Why was this author's contribution to Malaysian WKF karate history deliberately omitted by the Malaysian Karate Federation? Why was Gilles Cherdieu treated so unjustly by the FFKDA leadership of Didier Francis, a relatively new member of the WKF-EC? The unjust treatment of one karateka by another is all too common and a universal phenomenon. For this reason a lot of us tend to be very skeptical of those who hide behind lofty ideals of ancient codes such as the Bushido, which today is not worth the paper it is written on. Many have commented that it is rather uncomfortable to attend world championships that are inundated with "suffocating fumes of little men drunk with big egos", preaching humility to students in the dojo and practicing a "dance of the peacocks" at all other times. While egocentrism appears to be a general affliction in karate circles all over the world, Western European teams and officials have led the way until the recent years of humbling defeats by the Slavic challenge and beyond. One finds a more friendly karate atmosphere among these people.

It is this egocentric essence that is the cause of persistent internal political strife and the mushrooming of so many rival karate organizations within national boundaries and the international scene. Can one be blamed for the temptation to conclude that there must be something inherently wrong with a karate personality that clearly has no time for democratic

norms, especially a rightful place for “loyal opposition”. What we all see is karate leaders coming to power by manipulating the democratic system, and then quickly replacing it with an autocratic management style to ensure long tenure. The national federations of both Third World and advanced nations appear to be infected with this syndrome to such a degree that some of them have to bring in non-karate practicing “outsiders” to act as a buffer between rivals factions (the recent formation and composition of the short-lived Karate England in November 2005 is a classic example). This may be a sad reflection of martial arts itself, as one cannot help but suspect that the quest for physical prowess in karate-do also generates a tremendous negative ego in the same individuals (sanctioned by the Bushido code). What we are witnessing as political strife is essentially a clash of karate-generated egos. Thus the martial arts tradition may be more prone to conflict rather than cooperation and harmonious co-existence. This may readily explain the propensity for severe internal strife within so many national federations. What we see at the international level (WKF,EKF etc) may well be from a national “breeding ground” source; one that over time results in the lack of respect by one old tradition (karate-do) for another a lot older and more important in our lives, democracy.

In conclusion, we must say that the power system in place appears to be designing world karate to suit personal and small group interests over the establishment of a solid foundation to carry karate through the ever continuing saga of our Olympic dreams and beyond. Thanks to the promulgation of self-serving statutes, (especially that introduced at 2006 WKF-18 in Finland), requiring EC experience for candidates wishing to stand for the presidency (4 years within the last 3 terms), we no longer have multiple candidates for elections for the “top job” (as all EC members are elected on the Presidents slate, no EC member will dare to run against an incumbent for the office of President).

After 10 years of a long-awaited new leadership it now appears as if we merely have “more of the same”, with new faces playing the same old game of democracy with a Latin “caudillo” twist. The new leadership’s campaign for inclusion of karate in the 2012 Olympics was for a time clearly more toned-down after the setbacks of 117th IOC session of Singapore (July 2005) but it appears to be picking up steam again as we approach the 119th Session of Copenhagen in 2009. Even though the 118th IOC Session of 2007 changed the new-sports admissions requirement to a simple majority for both rounds of the sports recognition process, “short-listing” and expectations of easier admission is still wishful thinking in the face of fierce rivals for limited slots. All new efforts by our leadership appear to be just dates on an uncertain horizon deliberately designed to exite us into support for them. Our job as loyalists of the WKF movement of karate is to separate all this false posturing (such as Sport Accord 2006, GAISF Martial Arts Working Group and “internet polls” showing us ahead of rival sports etc.) by the current leadership from real action that will get us into the Olympic Games. The fact is even if we overcome the challenges of rivals and get in at the 119th Session in Copenhagen, the earliest we can be scheduled for will be at the 2016 Olympics, given that scheduling takes place 7 years in advance.

However the bottom line is that we as karatekas cannot sacrifice democracy to achieve our Olympic dreams. The quest for Olympic “glory” (as we have said before, you will never be a face on Coca-Cola commercials winning medals in a small Olympic sport, as taekwondo has found out) is only once every four years whereas we need a democratic way of life everyday. The choice must be clear. The end does not justify the means. Picking, choosing and copying certain articles of the Olympic Charter to justify central authority over national federations/national sovereignty is counter-productive in the long run. Such a policy pits the Congress against the EC and in so doing sets the stage for a confrontational situation. Karatekas from old world democracies-national federations must by example show the newer democracies the proper way to lead an international karate organization such as the WKF. Statutes implemented to ensure long executive political tenure and the abuse of the refereeing sector for monetary gains must be vehemently and publicly opposed by a more questioning Congress. Checks and balances must be encouraged to discourage the current sense of elitism among EC members who have created an exclusive club at the top, far removed from athletes and their welfare. “Platform/team” based elections in any form must be prohibited by statute and the election of independent candidates

encouraged, ensuring an internal system of checks and balances at all times. "Platform"-candidates for elections only guarantees cronyism, partisan agendas and the concentration of all power in a single leader or small group. Most of all, the "decent majority" among us must not remain silent and expect these incursions on the democratic process within the WKF to "correct itself" with time. Unlike karate, democracy is not a spectator sport and the continued complacency of silent-decency is her sure death knell. We must have "zero tolerance" for all forms of corruption in our sport and this requires constant well publicized vigilance to ensure the three pillars of democracy, namely integrity, transparency and accountability. The health of civic democracy depends on active citizen participation and the constant vigilance over leadership that appears forever tempted to "adjust" democracy to suit partisan needs. In the case of sports this care and administration must be in the hands of prominent ex-athletes who have been vetted thoroughly for unethical conduct by separate independent Ethics and Nomination Commissions of the IOC kind. Conventional experience and wisdom should tell us when things are going in the wrong direction, as may be the case with the current WKF leadership. Now it may merely be political corruption and the pursuit of power but the trail will sooner or later almost always lead to economic corruption as well. It is wise to deal with this potentially negative development and "get our acts together" now before we enter the big league and "big money" of the Olympics.

According to Jens Weinreich, the author of 'Corruption in Sports' (Sports Editor of the Berliner Zeitung), "corruption is the biggest problem in the sports world and it is most widespread at the IOC and her member sports federations like FIFA". Even the UN's Agency on corruption (UNCAC) has expressed recent concerns, and it is no surprise that corruption ranks as the top concern of the public. A recent internet survey by 'Play the Game', the highly respected internet watch-dog group for corruption in sports based in Denmark (in which the Danish IOC and the Ministry of Sports are prominent participants) confirmed this (50% rated corruption as the #1 issue while child labor was second with 13%).^{5*} The "mafia" of corrupt sports federations have become so powerful that they have even affected the quality of investigative journalism by preventing access to events (Weinreich and Andrew Jennings the leading critics of FIFA corruption are no longer invited to their events), bribery and the threat of government reprisals. Many respectable sources (including the International Federation of Journalism under President Aidan White) feel that journalists have failed in their duties because of "excessive commercialization, political pressure, falling standards and poor working conditions" (tacit collaboration for "goodies" should also be included). In some countries major newspapers have openly abandoned their "sacred" role to protect the public interest and instead have joined forces with the sports establishments they are supposed to scrutinize, by becoming their sponsors (El Nuevo Dia in Puerto Rico is such an example). The issue is of such importance that the European Union recently completed a 'White Paper' on Sports recommending among other things greater government intervention in the administration of sports at the national and international levels (2007). This call is in direct antithesis to the successful IOC effort to weaken national sovereignty enshrined in page 28 of the Olympic Charter (whereby IOC members are representatives of the IOC in their respective countries and not vice-versa). An identical design is intended by the WKF in the adoption of Article 13.18 of the 2006 Revised Statutes. Given the international outcry against political and economic corruption in the administration of sports, such statutes should be repealed. Different ideas are being discussed as how best to prevent political and economic corruption in sports as part of a larger concern for the health of democracy even in the Western world, bearing in mind that political corruption always leads to economic corruption. All agree on one thing and that is that the current "mafia"-like control by small groups for private economic benefits must go. That these mature democracies have finally come to terms with the fact they have to set a good example for their "juniors" by showing that democracy is not just proper government from the top but also healthy democratic civic institutions for daily life at the "bottom". Leaving the responsibility of the administration of sports completely in the hands of private groups has been a dismal failure. Most like Weinreich agree also that the IOC, the "mother of them all" needs an independent supervisory council over it, composed of a mix of governmental and non-governmental organizations. Also given the international outcry against political and economic corruption in the administration of sports, all existing statutes that infringe on national sovereignty and impartial oversight must be repealed (such as the Olympic Charter

mentioned above and her identical copy as article 13.18 of the 2006 WKF Statutes). There are some valuable lessons that the WKF can learn from the mistakes of others like the IOC before corrupt behavior becomes institutionalized and therefore more difficult to deal with. The problem is that the WKF leadership appears instead to be looking for all kinds of articles in the Olympic Charter to duplicate that will enhance autocratic administration by curbing national authority vested in national federations and the Congress of the WKF. To protect against these and other negative developments the decent majority that has so far chosen to be silent must “open their mouths and scream” out loud, for democracy is not a spectator sport. The silence of decency is to blame for the crisis of democracy in the management of sports and other civic institutions.

The manipulation of universal sports ideals

We would like to bring this mission to a close by calling your attention to the corruption of the Olympic movement termed more appropriately as “Olympism”. This term that has gathered noble moss with time since the inception of the modern Games in 1896 has lost her “sacred aura” since getting caught up in the economic and political corruption of the times. Look at who the leaders of this “Olympism” legacy are; Samaranch (from the Spanish fascist legacy of General Franco and one time a member of his cabinet), Richard Carrion (responsible as CEO for the “money laundering” scandal of Puerto Rico’s Banco Popular) ; Un Yong Kim (longtime KCIA and Korean Military Junta agent who was jailed in Korea for 2.5 years over corruption charges); Park Yong Sung (IOC member from South Korea convicted for corporate fraud then pardoned by Presidential decree in 2007; who was suspended by the IOC and then reinstated as member within 13 months) and Lee Kun Hee of the Samsung Scandal infamy. Andrew Jennings book (The Lords of the Rings) has a more complete list of these “tainted characters” of the past and present in appendix. The only sports these guys excelled in was politics of the Machiavellian mould, which in the first place is probably what got them their tops jobs at the IOC. Why are they and not the “nobler” athletes of past Olympics the proper spokesmen of “Olympism” (Rogge with “clean” hands is a welcome change, but he has an uphill battle against a culture and legacy of corruption developed over so many years, especially under the long leadership of Samaranch). It will take a lot more than a lone Jacques Rogge to cleanse the Olympic movement of her negative image, thanks to years of corruption in her organizational ranks. We can only hope that people from the ranks of karate do not add to this bad state of affairs at this highest and most prestigious level of sports administration in the world. When all is said and done it is the Olympic Charter that is the “mother of all evils”. By statutorily defining IOC members as IOC representatives to NOCs and not the other way around as it should have been, the Olympic Charter is the source of the “original sin” that encouraged violations of national sovereignty and the emergence of autocratic leadership, all in the name of “private initiatives of ordinary citizens”. Since the IOC started this trend and the national sports scenes are the “incubators” of the good and bad for sports, they have an obligation to stop it with tools that they already have in the Charter. They merely have to enforce the 1999 Olympic Charter rules on term-limits for the Presidency and Executive Board, empower athletic representation vis-à-vis NOCs, while establishing Ethics and Nomination Commissions. To ensure life-tenure and access to the “freebees” those in power have appeared reluctant to do this.

The desperate efforts to brainwash the sporting youth of the world into abandoning national pride and identity for a vague international Olympic ideology (through the celebration of an annual “Olympic Day” etc) called “Olympism” is to say the least a misplaced priority that is doomed to fail. It is however a desperate attempt to maintain monopoly rights over the greatest sports franchise in the world always in private hands, especially in the face of the international clamor of recent years for some sort of public oversight over the Olympic Games, as a result of the many financial scandals experienced during the Samaranch-era and beyond. The “noble” declaration of Jacques Rogge at the 121st IOC Session of October 2009 in Copenhagen that the autonomy of sports must be protected from national politics at all costs is really a call for the failed policy of self-policing.

As for the WKF we must resist and expose all efforts by the current leadership to quickly convert the organization into an exclusive private organization like what the IOC has become. We cannot allow any WKF leadership to own “the best karate franchise in the world” forever. Whether we become an Olympic sport or not(Now that we have failed yet again to become an Olympic sport) the introduction of term limitations and the repealing of the many rules in the 2006 WKF Statutes that encourage autocratic leadership, is in short order. We also have to ask ourselves an important question. Should Espinos not resign honorably at his “catastrophic” repeated failure to get us into the Olympic Games in over 10 years of leadership? We further believe it is morally imperative to protest angrily and ask for such a resignation, because we know well that it will not be forthcoming otherwise.

Antonio Espinos will be the only candidate for the Presidential elections of 2010 in Belgrade at WKF-20.

After 12 years in office, he is poised to be the only candidate for the upcoming elections for the Presidency on the occasion of the 20th WKF Senior Championships of October 2010 in Belgrade, Serbia. This is because only Executive Committee (EC) members with 4 years or more of service are eligible for candidature, and given that the EC is packed with Antonio’s merry men and women, no challenge is expected from this body. This will be his third term and 18 years as President of the WKF by 2016. Life tenure is solidly on track, with all the “goodies” that this brings with it, including an expense account/“salary” that will be the envy of most corporate CEOs. Only a “revolt” by the WKF Congress members can start a process to change the WKF Constitution/Statutes to prevent political and economic abuses of WKF resources through “one-man rule”; but given a weak-meek Congress this seems highly unlikely.

Just a few “corrections” can go a long way towards fixing the problem of managing the WKF by a few for a few. First and foremost there must be term-limitations for the post of President and members of the Executive Committee a la the IOC Charter (this being the most important change of the 1999 IOC reforms following the scandals of the Samaranch era. Secondly the 4-year EC-service requirement for Presidential candidates must be abolished and the door, open to all at-large candidates endorsed by their national federations. Endorsement by the national federation must be a prerequisite for all candidates and all candidates must also be screened and endorsed by a WKF Ethics Commission (currently non-existent). All members of the Referees Commission must be elected by their peers, subject to term-limits and confirmed by the EC/ Congress. Athletes Commission must be peer-elected, enlarged and given significant full representation a la IOC in the EC. An empowered Athletes Commission must given a voice in both the Technical and Referees Commissions. The Technical Commission must be composed of bona fide karate experts such as ex-champions and elite coaches. The Statutes must also provide for a Coaches Commission composed of elite coaches with full representation in the EC. Gender equity must be a priority at all levels of the WKF organization. With the exception of the Medical and Legal Commissions, all WKF positions must be filled by people with bona fide karate qualifications. Most of all entry into the EC must not be “closed” through platform politics and at large candidates must not be prevented from becoming candidates for the Presidential race through use of the 4-year EC-service requirement for candidates. It is also very important to have language requirements (proficiency in the English language) for EC candidates to prevent this important body from becoming a “sleeping partner” of the President.

These are structural changes that can improve us as an international IOC-member democratic organization in the service of karate athletes, but there is no replacement for constant vigilance and critique by us all of negative developments of the kind this book has hopefully suggested all too clearly. It is the “silence of decency” by all of us but especially the WKF Congress that is the root cause of the erosion of accountable and transparent democracy with our organization. There is need for a serious attitude-change among insiders in power to move aside for real talent in leadership that is properly equipped with English language skills, respect for term-limits and above all recognition that athletes are the first priority and *raison d’etre* for the existence of the WKF.

We hope that this long overdue book is only a beginning for other works to follow suit from concerned insiders and outsiders. As a former academic I can foresee academic dissertations being conducted on this virgin subject. Meanwhile the authors are responsible for all contents and contentions, and welcome any counter claims, which can only encourage a much needed dialogue on this subject.

Footnotes

1. As an open any style umbrella organization, membership is made very easy for karate groups from any style, not unlike some Japanese umbrella organizations. This is a fast way of expanding the “empire”, than mere dependence on disgruntled same-style karatekas. Looking at the KOI website (www.worldkarate.net) and a photo of senior KOI instructors world-wide wearing KOI emblems, one has to be impressed at the way in which these instructors have combined the “wearing of the two hats”; one belonging to their own style, and the other to KOI.
2. See Andrew Jennings; *The New Lords of the Rings*; pg.281 Pocket Books (Simon & Schuster; London; 1996).
3. Millerson is also a former member of the Dutch national kumite team of the 1960s and 70s. Until the late 1980s he was also coach-fighter of the Curacao team (known in WKF as Netherlands Antilles) and brought home many PKF-WKF medals (I.Senff won a WKF gold medal in kumite in 1996 at WKF-13). As coach he steered the Curacao team to a bronze medal in team kumite at WKF-12 in Malaysia.
4. Mitsusuke Harada; in “Warriors Path-Wisdom from Contemporary Martial Arts Masters”; Edited by James Sydney. Shambhala Publishing Co.Boston.MA.2003; pg 96.
5. See www.PlayTheGame.org The Game. This watch-dog group based in Denmark (and recognized by the Danish NOC) was established in 1997 and holds a biennial international conference with the aim of “strengthening the basic ethical values of sport and encourage democracy, transparency and the freedom of expression in world sport”. At the 2007 Conference speaker Dick Pound the outgoing President of WADA said;” the coalition against corruption in sports is something which the sports world should consider very seriously”. Other prominent speakers were Andrew Jennings (of the best-seller books the ‘Lord and New Lord of the Rings’ fame); Mathieu Reeb, Secretary General of TAS/Court for Arbitration of Sports, Lausanne and Niels Nygaard of Denmark; President of the Danish National Olympic Committee.

