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**“It is ‘Force Majeure’”: The Abrupt Boycott Movements of the 1956
Melbourne Summer Olympic Games**

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by

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Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Science in Kinesiology

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2017

Dedication

To my mother *Debbie*,
my father *Tom*, and my brother *Riley*
for always being there for me

Acknowledgements

My time at the University of Texas at Austin would not have been possible without the wonderful support system I have around me. I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Thomas Hunt, for leading me in the right direction and for his constructive criticism throughout the writing process. He has helped me make sense of each of the challenges that have been thrown in my way and has always managed to set time aside for me with whatever I need help with. He also deserves full credit for allowing me access to the Avery Brundage Collection, of which this work would not have been possible without. I am also indebted to Dr. Matthew Bowers, who has taken an active role in my master's education from my first day on the Forty Acres and has always gone out of his way to provide me with opportunities to pursue my academic and career goals. Drs. Emily Sparvero and Tolga Ozyurtcu have provided stellar support in pursuing both my professional and personal goals in my two years in the master's program and have been a pleasure to collaborate with. Dr. Jan Todd also deserves special recognition for introducing me to the field of physical culture and sport history and for being an excellent mentor.

My education also would not have been possible without Shari Durrett and Second Baptist School in Houston, Texas, who took a chance on me right out of college and provided me with one of the most exciting years in my life. In a similar vein, I appreciate and thank my supervisors and co-workers at the Department of Communications at University of Texas Athletics for providing me with the internship of a lifetime.

I also would like to recognize my cohort in the sport management master's program, who have made my time in Austin unforgettable. The writing process has been a grind, and my fellow graduate students have been an endless source of support throughout.

Nobody has been more important to me than the members of my family. My parents, Tom and Debbie, have providing unending support for everything that I pursue in life and are my personal heroes. My brother Riley has been a pillar in how I have shaped my own life and has been an constant source of laughs and support. Finally, special thanks go Sue, Tyler, and Josie Berg, allowed me to get my start in the state of Texas and are truly treasured members of my family and exemplars of hospitality.

Abstract

“It is ‘Force Majeure’”: The Abrupt Boycott Movements of the 1956 Melbourne Summer Olympic Games

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2017

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Why do countries boycott the Olympic Games? The nature of boycott movements in the Olympic Games has been covered extensively in academic literature, and scholars rely on a limited set of cases to determine how and why these boycotts occur. The 1956 Summer Olympic Games in Melbourne, Australia, experienced a flurry of boycotts from delegations from seven different countries in the weeks leading up to the opening ceremonies, resulting in a scramble by the International Olympic Committee (I.O.C.) to ask each delegation to reconsider. In his first Summer Olympic Games as the president of the I.O.C., Avery Brundage was immediately thrust into the troubling relationship between politics and sport with the outbreak of two major conflicts, the Suez Crisis and the Hungarian Revolution. In addition, the problem of the “Two Chinas” had affected the delegations from Taiwan and the People’s Republic of China, continuing the issue of Chinese representation leading up to the Games in Melbourne.

This paper uses a combination of archival research and discourse analysis to analyze the motivations and reasoning of each of the delegations that expressed desire to boycott the 1956 Summer Olympic Games. Primary source material was taken from the

Avery Brundage Collection, which includes correspondence, minutes, reports, photographs, clippings, scrapbooks, artifacts, certificates, awards, honors, publications concerning Brundage's service during his tenure as the president of the I.O.C. Newspaper articles and Associated Press reports are also included, which provide first-hand accounts of the events that transpired before, during and after the 1956 Melbourne Summer Olympic Games.

This paper ultimately argues that while political motivations provided a plausible excuse for abstaining from attending the Games, underlying reasons ranging from transportation to financial issues were the main deterrent for countries choosing to withdraw their teams from participating. Given that the 1956 Summer Olympic Games were the first to be held outside of Europe, delegations struggled sending a full team to Melbourne to compete due to financial constraints. Using the specter of international conflict to shroud their true intentions of attending, the countries of Spain, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Egypt, Lebanon, and Iraq each abstained from attending the Games.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

“Olympic Games must, conforming to the Olympic Rules, always be a festival of peace, a chevaleresque competition between athletes and never between countries. Emphasizing national interests on the field of sports will be a deterioration [sic] of the Games, as it leads to excesses and makes it difficult to maintain the amateur definition.”

Colonel P.W. Scharroo, I.O.C. Member, The Netherlands (January 15, 1956)

Well after the closing ceremonies of the 1956 Summer Olympic Games that took place in Melbourne, Australia, International Olympic Committee (I.O.C.) member Charles Ferdinand (C.F.) Pahud de Mortanges of The Netherlands penned a message to I.O.C. president Avery Brundage regarding an unforeseen circumstance. Mortanges explained that his doctor had prescribed him to visit the French spa town of Aix-les-Bains to help heal a fit of arthritis that had bothered him for “several weeks.” This ailment would prevent him from attending an annual meeting of the I.O.C. in Sofia, Bulgaria, in September 1957. At first remorseful for his unavailability, the tone of his letter shifted to unease. His absence would coincide with the absence of The Netherlands’ second member, the oft-truant Colonel Pieter Wilhelmus (P.W.) Scharroo, which would result in zero Dutch representation in the first meeting of I.O.C. members since the 1956 Melbourne Games. Mortanges confessed to Brundage, “. . . I am uneasy about my absence in connection with the fact that Holland did not appear at the Games in Melbourne. It is ‘force Majeure.’”¹

¹ Charles Ferdinand Pahud de Mortanges to Avery Brundage, 15 September 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, University Archives of the University of Illinois [hereafter Avery Brundage Collection], Box 61, Folder: Mortanges, C.F. Pahud de, 1954, 1958-60, 1964; Netherlands.

The term “force majeure” is a commonly-used term in law that refers to a common clause in contracts that essentially frees both parties from liability or obligation when an extraordinary circumstance beyond the control of the parties. Mortanges used the term to convey the repeated absences of the Dutch arm of the I.O.C. when different events occurred that were not anticipated or controlled. The situation, of which the Dutch were involved, that this instance mirrors is the several, abrupt boycott movements that occurred within months, weeks, and even days before the opening ceremonies of the 1956 Melbourne Summer Olympic Games. An avalanche of telegrams regarding the abstention of member nations made its way to the desk of I.O.C. Chancellor Otto Mayer in Lausanne, Switzerland, which were largely taken in response to the major outbreaks of war in Egypt and Hungary. Facing his first Summer Olympic Games as the president of the I.O.C., Brundage already had a colossal participation problem in his hands.

I.O.C. president Sigfrid Edström presided over his final Summer Olympic Games as chief representative of the Olympic Movement in 1952 when 69 nations gathered to compete in Helsinki, Finland. He passed the torch to American Avery Brundage, who assumed the office as the fifth I.O.C. President shortly after the conclusion of the 1952 Games. Brundage had been a protégé of the presidency and had considerable time to look forward to the next edition of the Summer Olympic Games, which were slated to be held in Melbourne over the months of November and December of 1956.

According to scholar Toby C. Rider, “no American believed in the Olympic ideals more, or defended them with greater zeal,” than Avery Brundage.² After competing in the decathlon at the 1912 Summer Olympic Games for the United States at Stockholm, the Olympic experience filled him with joy and admiration: “My conversion, along with many others, to Coubertin’s religion, the Olympic Movement, was complete.”³ Following this trip, he returned home and won the all-around athletic championship of the U.S. on three occasions (1914, 1916, and 1918), and developed into a first-rate handball player. Brundage had already made a fortune in the construction business, allowing him the freedom to pursue sports administration, getting his start in the Central Association of the AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) in 1919 and then becoming the vice president of the AAU in 1925. In 1928, he was elected president of both the AAU and its Olympic arm, the American Olympic Association (AOA), the forerunner of the United States Olympic Committee (USOC), which he led until his election as the president of the I.O.C. in 1952.

International political events outside of the confines of the I.O.C. greatly influenced Brundage’s leadership style. According to historian Alfred E. Senn, Cold War rhetoric and maneuvering greatly complicated his position from the moment he assumed his position as President. Throughout his tenure, he was “. . . having visions of renewing the Games as he thought Coubertin would have wanted them, [seeking to] desperately . . . avoid taking sides in the Cold War.”⁴ Rider notes that in protesting the pillar of politics and its entanglement in Olympic conduct, Brundage would, “. . . seldom recoil or stand aside from battle,

² Toby C. Rider, *Cold War Games: Propaganda, the Olympics, and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 39.

³ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴ Alfred E. Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games* (Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics, 1999), 105.

justifying his decisions by quoting the rules as written in the Olympic Charter.”⁵ The 1952 Helsinki Games offered an initial offering as to what the competition between the two major world powers’ delegations would look like, with the United States an established sporting power and the Soviet Union making its first appearance and taking home a combined 62 gold medals in 149 events.

The preparation of the Games caused some doubt about whether the local organizing committee would be ready on time for the opening ceremonies, but otherwise the member nations of the I.O.C. were enthusiastic to be participating in Australia. Brundage was anticipating a record number of nations in attendance for the sixteenth edition of the Summer Olympic Games. The telegrams that were sent to I.O.C. headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland, were received by I.O.C. chancellor Otto Mayer, who immediately recognized that Brundage’s plans could be thrown into flux. He quickly relayed the information to Brundage, who was already halfway across the world in Australia to begin the Olympic festivities. Following agitated attempts to convince each nation to rescind its withdrawal within a matter of days, the result was a boycott by seven National Olympic Committees: The People’s Republic of China, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, The Netherlands, Spain, and Switzerland. According to Melbourne newspaper *The Argus*, Denmark, Norway, Belgium, and Luxembourg were also included in the list of countries “doubtful” to participate, but were ultimately included in the final program.⁶

⁵ Rider, *Cold War Games: Propaganda, the Olympics, and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 40.

⁶ “Kent Hughes’ Plea to Athletes, Spectators: ‘DON’T SACRIFICE OUR GAMES TO POLITICS,’” *The Argus* (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia), Nov. 8, 1951.

Table 1 – Timeline of major events relating to the several boycotts from the 1956 Melbourne Summer Olympic Games

May 15, 1954	The I.O.C. votes to recognize the <i>People’s Republic of China (PRC)</i> as a member by a 23-21 vote
August 13, 1956	<i>Egypt</i> notifies the I.O.C. that it will not attend Melbourne Games
October 4, 1956	I.O.C. executive members move to recognize both <i>Taiwan</i> and <i>PRC</i> at the upcoming Games
October 23, 1956	The Hungarian Revolution begins
October 25, 1956	<i>Lebanon</i> withdraws from the Melbourne Games due to transportation issues
October 28, 1956	The I.O.C. requests the immediate departure of the delegation from <i>Hungary</i> to Melbourne
October 29, 1956	The government of Israel invaded the Egyptian Sinai, marking the beginning of the Suez Crisis
October 30, 1956	The I.O.C. declares an “Olympic Truce” Associated Press reports possible <i>Israel</i> withdrawal
November 6, 1956	<i>PRC</i> formally withdraws due to <i>Taiwan</i> ’s inclusion at Melbourne Games British government announces cease fire in Suez Crisis, which ends military action in the Suez Canal zone
November 7, 1956	<i>The Netherlands</i> sends telegram to notify the I.O.C. of abstention <i>Switzerland</i> withdraws from Melbourne Games
November 8, 1956	Colonel P.W. Scharroo confirms withdrawal of <i>The Netherlands</i> to I.O.C. officials
November 9, 1956	<i>Spain</i> withdraws from Melbourne Games <i>Hungary</i> departs for Melbourne, assuring participation at Games
November 10, 1956	Revolution in Hungary crushed; Soviets claim victory
November 11, 1956	<i>Switzerland</i> N.O.C. meets to reconsider withdrawal
November 12, 1956	<i>Lebanon</i> formally amends its reasoning to withdraw, citing “solidarity with Egypt” in wake of Suez Crisis <i>Iraq</i> withdraws from Melbourne Games
November 19, 1956	<i>Switzerland</i> formally notifies the I.O.C. of its final decision to withdraw
November 22, 1956	1956 Melbourne Summer Olympic Games officially open

Olympic boycotts have been documented extensively in the existing academic literature, but scant attention has been paid to the several boycott movements that occurred during the 1956 Summer Olympic Games in Melbourne.⁷ Three major boycott movements have already received extensive attention due to each of their global political consequences: The 1936 Summer Olympic Games in Berlin, 1980 Summer Olympic Games in Moscow, and 1984 Summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles have each built on the array of historical analysis regarding the nature and political implications of Olympic boycotts, but this analysis is not entirely exhaustive.⁸

⁷ Brennan K. Berg, Seth A. Kessler, and Thomas M. Hunt, "A Realist Perspective of Sport and International Relations: US Governmental Perceptions of Olympic Boycott Movements, 1936–2008," *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics* 4, no. 3 (2016): 307-320; Scott Rosner and Deborah Low, "The Efficacy of Olympic Bans and Boycotts on Effectuating International Political and Economic Change," *Texas Review of Entertainment and Sports Law* 11, no. 1 (2009-2010): 27-80; Cesar R. Torres, "Morally Incompatible?: An Analysis of the Relationship Between Competitive Sport and International Relations at the Olympic Games," *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 31, no. 1 (2011): 3-16.

⁸ For information on the 1936 Berlin Summer Olympic Games, see George Eisen, "The Voices of Sanity: American Diplomatic Reports from the 1936 Berlin Olympiad," *Journal of Sport History* 11, no. 3 (1984): 56-78; Bruce Kidd, "Canadian Opposition to the 1936 Olympics in Germany," *Sport History Review* 9, no. 2 (1978): 20-40; Arnd Krüger and William Murray (eds.), *The Nazi Olympics: Sport, Politics, and Appeasement in the 1930s* (Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2010); David Clay Large, *Nazi Games: The Olympics of 1936* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2007); Richard D. Mandell, *The Nazi Olympics* (New York: Macmillan, 1971); Stephen R. Wenn, "A Tale of Two Diplomats: George S. Messersmith and Charles H. Sherrill on Proposed American Participation in the 1936 Olympics," *Journal of Sport History* 16, no. 1 (1989): 27-43; Stephen R. Wenn, "A Suitable Policy of Neutrality? FDR and the Question of American Participation in the 1936 Olympics," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 8, no. 3 (1991): 319-335; Stephen R. Wenn, "A House Divided: the US Amateur Sport Establishment and the Issue of Participation in the 1936 Berlin Olympics," *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 67, no. 2 (1996): 161-171.

For information on the 1980 Moscow Summer Olympic Games, see Baruch A. Hazan, *Olympic Sports and Propaganda Games: Moscow 1980* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1982); Derick L. Hulme, *The Political Olympics: Moscow, Afghanistan, and the 1980 U.S. Boycott* (New York: Praeger, 1990); David B. Kanin, "The Olympic Boycott in Diplomatic Context," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 4, no. 1 (1980): 1-24; Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, *Dropping the Torch: Jimmy Carter, the Olympic boycott, and the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Phillip K. Shinnick, "Progressive Resistance to Nationalism and the 1980 Boycott of the Moscow Olympics," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 6, no. 2 (1982): 13-21; Stephen R. Wenn and Jeffrey P. Wenn, "Muhammad Ali and the Convergence of Olympic Sport and U.S. Diplomacy in 1980: A Reassessment from Behind the Scenes at the U.S. State Department," *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* 2 (1993): 45-66.

For information on the 1984 Los Angeles Summer Olympic Games, see Brad Congelio, *Before the World Was Quiet: Ronald Reagan, the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games, and the American Moral Compass*

Of the existing literature covering the political events surrounding the 1956 Melbourne Summer Olympic Games, University of Melbourne professor Barbara Keys provides the most depth in several aspects. Her article, “The 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games and the Postwar International Order” analyzes how countries used the Games as a stage to assert their nationhood and secure international legitimacy, some of which did so using the boycotts discussed in this essay.⁹ She briefly touches upon the political, economic and human rights dimensions of the 1956 Games, mentioning that the I.O.C. largely represented a “reactionary” rather than a progressive force for change in international order spurred by the early stages of the Cold War.¹⁰ Her research also covers the role of cultural exchange during the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games and its impact on the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union, examining Soviet propaganda as a “dangerous tool” that not only served the purposes of the Russians, but could also prove to be a “double-edged sword” that allowed for cultural infiltration in a culture-deprived Soviet society, ultimately destabilizing the Iron Curtain.¹¹ Her analysis concluded that sporting victories at the Olympic Games, including the Games in Melbourne, played an important role in

(Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press, in press); Philip D’Agati, *The Cold War and the 1984 Olympic Games: A Soviet-American Surrogate War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Allen Guttman, “The Cold War and the Olympics,” *International Journal* 43, no. 4 (1988): 554-568; John Hoberman, *The Olympic Crisis: Sport, Politics, and the Moral Order* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984).

⁹ Barbara Keys, “The 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games and the Postwar International Order,” in *1956: European and Global Perspectives*, eds. Carole Fink, Frank Hadler and Thomasz Schramm (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2006): 283-307.

¹⁰ Barbara Keys, “The Early Cold War Olympics, 1952-1960: Political, Economic and Human Rights Dimensions,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Olympic Studies*, eds. Helen Jefferson Lenskyj and Stephen Wagg (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012): 72-87.

¹¹ Barbara Keys, “The Soviet Union, Cultural Exchange, and the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games,” in *Sport zwischen Ost und West: Beiträge zur Sportgeschichte Osteuropas im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, eds. Arié Malz, Stefan Rohdewald, and Stefan Wiederkehr (Osnabrück: Fibre, 2007): 131-146.

legitimizing Soviet rule at home and in enhancing Soviet prestige abroad, but participation in the Olympics may have also served as an opening to global cultural influences that helped undermine Soviet rule. Her coverage of the 1956 Games is extensive, but does not cover the boycott efforts that were, in part, caused by Cold War influences.

The Cold War is among the most covered topics in the existing literature about the 1956 Games. Historians Eric Monnin and Renaud David also cover the Games in Melbourne against the backdrop of the Cold War, but their focus expands past the two hegemonic powers and examines the impact of the political influences of the superpowers on proxy states, including those who were garnering the most attention for abstaining from the Games. The aftermath of the 1956 Melbourne Summer Olympic Game is also focused on in the existing literature. Rider provides a solid analysis of how *Sports Illustrated* assisted in the defection of 38 Eastern European athletes, including 34 Hungarians, following the closing ceremonies of the Melbourne Games, but this analysis focuses on the events from a Cold War perspective and how it advanced the conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union.¹² Against the backdrop of the historical events that occurred in late 1956, however, little scholarly attention has been focused on the “Two Chinas” Problem, the Hungarian Revolution, and the Suez Crisis in terms of their impact on participation at the Summer Olympic Games. Scholar John Hughson also covers the issue of the recovery of historical footage of the 1956 Games, which was lost after debuting as

¹² Rider, *Cold War Games: Propaganda, the Olympics, and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 103-121; Toby C. Rider “Eastern Europe’s Unwanted: Exiled Athletes and the Olympic Games, 1948-1964,” *Journal of Sport History* 40, no. 3 (2013): 435-453; For more on *Sports Illustrated*’s influence in the Melbourne Games, see John Massaro, “Press Box Propaganda? The Cold War and *Sports Illustrated*, 1956,” *The Journal of American Culture* 26, no. 3 (2003): 361-370.

the Olympic Games' first possibility to be widely broadcast on television.¹³ Produced and directed by Australian filmmaker Peter Whitchurch, the film had reputedly deteriorated and risked being lost as an item of historical record, but was “painstakingly” restored and prepared for conversion to a DVD format for public distribution in 2000. The situation is discussed broadly by I.O.C. leadership following the Games, but did not touch on the boycott movements.

Attention has also focused on the revitalization of the host city, Melbourne, and how the Games represented a catalyst of urban development.¹⁴ The existing literature also gives attention to the “Blood in the Water” water polo match between Hungary and the Soviet Union, which took place against the background of the Hungarian Revolution, a focusing event that led to the withdrawal of The Netherlands, Spain, and Switzerland.¹⁵ In addition, there have been historiographies written on how the Games have been covered, with a notable example coming from Ivan & Iván, who analyze the Games from the perspective of Hungarian historians against the backdrop of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956.¹⁶

¹³ John Hughson, “The Friendly Games – The ‘Official’ IOC Film of the 1956 Melbourne Olympics as Historical Record,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 30, no. 4 (2010): 529-542.

¹⁴ Graeme Davison, “Welcoming the World: The 1956 Olympic Games and the Re-Presentation of Melbourne,” *Australian Historical Studies* 27, no. 109 (1997): 64-76; Stephen Essex and Brian Chalkley, “Olympic Games: Catalyst of Urban Change,” *Leisure Studies* 17, no. 3 (1998): 187-206; Tanja Luckins, *Competing for Cultural Honours: Cosmopolitanism, Food, Drink and the Olympic Games, Melbourne, 1956*, edited by D. Kirkby, and T. Luckins (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

¹⁵ Carl Posey, *XVI Olympiad: Melbourne/Stockholm 1956, Squaw Valley 1960* (Warwick, N.Y.: Warwick Press Inc., 2015); Robert E. Rinehart, “‘Fists Flew and Blood Flowed’: Symbolic Resistance and International Response in Hungarian Water Polo at the Melbourne Olympics, 1956,” *Journal of Sport History* 23, no. 2 (1996): 120-139; Robert E. Rinehart, “Cold War Expatriot Sport: Symbolic Resistance and International Response in Hungarian Water Polo at the Melbourne Olympics, 1956,” in *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War*, eds. Stephen Wagg and David L. Andrews (Routledge, 2007): 45-63.

¹⁶ Emese Ivan with Dezső Iván, “The 1956 Revolution and the Melbourne Olympics: The Changing Perceptions of a Dramatic Story,” *Hungarian Studies Review* XXXV, nos. 1-2 (2008): 9-23.

The 1956 Summer Olympic Games represented a continuation of a new era of Olympic celebrations following the end of World War II. According to scholar Nicholas J. Cull, the post-war Olympic Games seemed conceived to serve a transparent public diplomacy agenda.¹⁷ Both London in 1948 and Helsinki in 1952 presented their Games as gestures of national recovery following the war, with the specific case of London signaling this especially as athletes were asked to bring their own food because of the persistence of wartime rationing.¹⁸ As Cull explains of the 1956 Melbourne Games, the event was “intended as a coming out party for Australia, and international press coverage about behind-schedule buildings in the run-up to the games gave ample evidence of that country’s need to update its sheep-and-bush-hats image in the world.”¹⁹

In his 1999 *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games*, Historian Alfred E. Senn provided a positive assessment of the future of the Olympic movement following the competitions in 1952 and 1956, arguing that Brundage had survived the challenge of separating international political pressures from the Games. He goes on to say:

These were formative Olympics, establishing the bases for the confrontation and competition between the two superpowers who had different economic systems and different sport systems. The Olympic Games survived the challenge, absorbing the superpowers’ rivalry into the fabric of the competition. The Cold War had moved into the Games, the Games had merged into the Cold War, but the Cold War did not co-opt the Games.²⁰

¹⁷ Nicholas J. Cull. “The Public Diplomacy of the Modern Olympic Games and China’s Soft Power Strategy,” in *Owning the Olympics: Narratives of the New China*, edited by Monroe E. Price and Daniel Dayan (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 122.

¹⁸ Allison Danzig, “Strong American Contingent Will Leave This Week for London ... Food to Be Taken Along,” *New York Times*, July 11, 1948.

¹⁹ Cull. “The Public Diplomacy of the Modern Olympic Games and China’s Soft Power Strategy,” 122.

²⁰ Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games*, 109.

This study's methodological approach includes a mix of archival research and discourse analysis. This paper relies heavily on the Avery Brundage Collection, which includes correspondence between members of the I.O.C., I.O.C. minutes from General and Executive Sessions, official documents relating to the Olympic Games, newspaper clippings, photographs, certificates, awards, honors, and publications. Correspondence between I.O.C. President Avery Brundage and his chancellor Otto Mayer was extensive during this time, as Brundage even told his chancellor that communication between the two was, “. . . becoming so voluminous that it will soon be easier for either you to move here [to Chicago] or me to go to Switzerland.”²¹

This paper seeks to add to the existing literature on the 1956 Melbourne Summer Olympic Games and the boycott movements that preceded it. The abstentions were critical in a time of shifting leadership in the I.O.C. and added to the backdrop of the emerging Cold War that was rising between the United States and the Soviet Union. In covering this topic, I hope to shed light on the nature of boycott movements, including why and how they occur in the context of the Olympic Games. This retrospective view can help us understand the reasons and behaviors relating to why countries boycott the Olympic Games and provides a case study that can help contemporary observers to understand why countries may choose to abstain from participating in Olympic events in the future.

²¹ Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer, 3 August 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

Chapter 2: Preparing for the 1956 Summer Olympic Games

Before being selected to host the Summer Olympic Games, the city of Melbourne had never hosted an event of similar magnitude in its history, having experienced a surge in population and urban growth in the mid-20th century. Between 1950 and 1970, Melbourne became, for the first time since the 1880s, the fastest growing capital in Australia.²² Perhaps more than any other Australian city it exemplified the “Fordist” paradigm of urban growth— high investment in manufacturing, especially of protected consumer products such as cars and electrical goods, high levels of immigration, high levels of car and home ownership and high levels of government intervention in the provision of infrastructure.²³ No city on the continent was more capable than Melbourne in hosting an event like the Olympic Games, but to be considered, it needed considerable backing both domestically and internationally.

The Commonwealth of Australia officially nominated the city of Melbourne to host the 1956 Summer Olympic Games on February 15, 1949, highlighting in its official bid that, “It would be the first occasion that any part of the Southern Hemisphere had been honoured by the award if the City of Melbourne’s invitation is accepted.”²⁴ The city was in a favorable position as the 1956 Summer Olympic Games were the first in the modern Olympiad to not have a European candidate city, limiting the competition that it would face. The city also enjoyed support from national and international Olympic committee

²² Davison, 65.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ “Melbourne’s Plan,” Official Bid to host the 1956 Summer Olympic Games, n.d., Avery Brundage Collection, Box 162, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Official Invitation); The 1940 Summer Olympic Games had been awarded to Tokyo, but the Japanese government had renounced the bid in 1938 to focus on its efforts in World War II.

delegates, local governments, and city businessmen, who were all confident that hosting the Games would bring international recognition and financial benefits.²⁵ Brundage commended the bid to hold the Games in Melbourne, summarizing his thoughts about the country's participation in the Games in a televised statement:

Australia is one, and a very important one of these countries, because she has been an ardent supporter of the Olympic movement since the first Games in 1896 in Athens, in which she participated with such success that the Australian flag was raised twice in the Stadium to herald the victories won in the 800 and in the 1,500 metre runs. Australia's taken part in each set of Games since 1896 with great distinction. As a result, the International Olympic Committee was happy to accept the invitation extended by a small group of Melbourne citizens, who travelled one-half way round the world to the International Olympic Committee meeting in Rome in [1949]. The Games are now being held for the first time in the Southern Hemisphere, and the Olympic ideals have been demonstrated on another continent.²⁶

The members of the I.O.C. provided broad support for the bid, but competing bids would provide a challenge for the Australian city. At Rome in 1949, the games of the XVI Olympiad were awarded to Melbourne after a close contest with officials from Buenos Aires, which was edged out in the final round of voting by a single vote, 21-20. Brundage was happy about the prospects of an Olympic "debut" in the Far East.²⁷ Since the Games were held in the Southern Hemisphere, they had to be scheduled in November and December. European delegations complained about having to travel so far, while Australians had trouble with the organization of the Games leading up to 1956, causing unrest from the upper echelons of the I.O.C. and trickling down to global media sources,

²⁵ Davison, 66-68.

²⁶ Australian Broadcasting Commission "Guest of Honour" speech by Avery Brundage, 25 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1956-59).

²⁷ Allen Guttman, *The Games Must Go On – Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 159.

whose criticism of the setup disturbed relationships between the I.O.C. and the local organizing committee. As historians Eric Monnin and Renaud David also point out, “certain athletes, having made prior commitments to their studies or their jobs, would be unable to participate. Others would be out of shape because the sporting season was out of synch with that of the northern hemisphere.”²⁸

The commitment to expanding the Games outside of Europe came with a price, argues Barbara Keys. Travel to Australia was expensive and time-consuming, and its tourism industry was weakly developed.²⁹ Before 1956 the country had never attracted more than 50,000 visitors, most of whom arrived by sea after month-long voyages. If tourists wanted to save time on travel to the continent, a round-trip plane ticket would slash travel time but come at the same cost as a three-bedroom house in the suburbs of Melbourne. Taking into consideration the cost of attending the events and finding a hotel, which were scarce and were not prepared to meet the demand of the number of Olympic visitors, the cost of attendance would surely decrease the number of visitors than past Olympic events.

It was only after the Games had been won did politicians and organizers begin seriously to count the costs as well as the benefits of the undertaking, which immediately appeared to not be in their favor.³⁰ As Australian historian Gareme Davison points out, the late 1940s and early 1950s was a period of instability in state politics and of continued restraint in public expenditure. A small but vocal minority of Labor politicians and welfare

²⁸ Eric Monnin and Renaud David, “The Melbourne Olympic Games in the Context of the International Tensions of 1956,” *Journal of Olympic History* 17, no. 3 (2009): 34.

²⁹ Keys, “The 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games and the Postwar International Order,” 286.

³⁰ Davison, 69.

workers had opposed the Games as an unjustifiable extravagance, causing several infrastructure and housing projects in the area to come to a halt. In the province of Victoria, support for the Games (63 percent) was weaker than the 75 percent approval nationwide, as Melburnians questioned in newspaper surveys often mentioned the housing shortage in justification for their opposition to the Games.³¹

Issues with officiating were also present, as a group of Victorian sporting officials threatened to boycott the Games because of a proposal by the Victorian Olympic Council to increase the size of the committee, arguing that the decision had failed in a poll of all Australian amateur sports bodies.³² Victorian Olympic Council chairman T.J. Uren stated that, “This threatened action could easily cost us the Games . . . We are doing everything we can do to placate the hotheads.”³³ Melbourne’s *The Argus* reported that Australian amateur athletes were willing to take extraordinary measures by “short-circuiting” the Victorian Government and apply for loan assistance to finance the Games on their own if the government was not prepared to secure funds to realize the bid.³⁴

In correspondence between Brundage and Mayer on September 20, 1952, Brundage told Mayer that optimism from Melbourne Olympic organizing committee president Sir Arthur William Coles was “not shared by others” in the committee, being told from his American friends in the country that, “none of them see how it is possible . . . to stage the

³¹ “INSIDE STORY OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES SQUABBLE,” *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia), Nov. 5, 1951.

³² “Threat to boycott Olympic,” *Sunday Mail* (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia), June 4, 1950.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ “Amateurs willing to stage Games,” *The Argus* (Melbourne, Victoria, Australia), Apr. 7, 1951.

Games properly.”³⁵ In January 1953, Mayer reported to Brundage that “Concerning Melbourne they are having fights ever since they got the Games: soon it will be 4 years.”³⁶ Upset with the progress in organizing the Games, which were slated to open in three years, he preliminarily suggested moving the Games to the United States, as “Only an American City can do this work now in such a short delay and the Games should be given there.”³⁷ Brundage publicly warned the Melbourne Olympic organizing committee that it must “prepare properly or lose the games.”³⁸

E.J. “Billy” Holt, the technical director for the Melbourne Olympic Organizing Committee, rebutted this sentiment made by the senior officials at the I.O.C. by stating, “It is true that there have been many difficulties and that, in the previous four years a great deal of the difficulties had not been settled, but I would remind you that if you refer to the history of all the Olympic Games, you will find that many, if not all, were very short of preparations four years previous to their Games.”³⁹ Despite this reassurance, the problems surrounding the Melbourne bid could not be ignored and would cause anxiety for the I.O.C. and its member nations looking ahead to the Games in 1956. Many of the problems revolving around the preparation of the Games directly involved the feasibility of holding specific sporting events. Rumors relayed back to the I.O.C. in Lausanne noted the prohibition of pistols in the state of Victoria inhibited the likelihood of holding shooting

³⁵ Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer, 20 September 1952, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 46, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Aug. 1, 1952 to June 30, 1953.

³⁶ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 22 January 1953, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 46, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Aug. 1, 1952 to June 30, 1953.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Associated Press, “Confirm Site of 1956 Olympics in Melbourne,” *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 19, 1953.

³⁹ E.J. Holt to Otto Mayer, 15 June 1953, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1950-‘55).

events in Melbourne, multiple cycling tracks had not been constructed properly or at all, and strikes delaying the construction of the Olympic Park Stadium that was slated to host football matches.⁴⁰

In a January 1954 meeting of the I.O.C. Executive Committee in Lausanne, executive member Armand Massard contended that awarding the Games to Melbourne had, “. . . proved to be a serious mistake.”⁴¹ Lord David Burghley and Prince Axel Christian Georg of Denmark, however, responded to this contention by maintaining that the withdrawal of the Games from Melbourne would violate rules set out in the Olympic Charter.⁴² H.E. Mohammed Taher Pasha from Egypt was also “not so sanguine” on taking the Games away from Melbourne, as he felt it would only create more harm than good.⁴³ This provided a change of heart for Mr. Massard, as the following executive committee meeting in May 1954 spearheaded a decision not to withdraw the Games from the city, in large part due to Massard’s “insisting on the fact that we are infringing the Rules and Regulations.”⁴⁴ As this decision was made, however, public opinion still needed to shift in favor of Melbourne hosting the Games, which was the next major hurdle that Avery

⁴⁰ Otto Mayer to E.J. Holt, 30 March 1955, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1955; Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 11 March 1955, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1955

⁴¹ Minutes of the IOC Executive Board, 17 January 1954, Lausanne, Switzerland, International Olympic Committee Library, Lausanne, Switzerland [hereafter IOCL], 3-4.

⁴² Lord Burghley’s birthname is David Cecil, who was the heir to the 5th Marquess of Exeter, his father. In August 1956, his father died and was hence known as the 6th Marquess of Exeter, a title he would carry until his death in 1981. For more, see David Cecil to Avery Brundage, 10 August 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 55, Folder: Exeter, Marquess David, former Lord Burghley, 1952-1959.

⁴³ Mohammed Taher Pasha to Avery Brundage, 11 January 1954, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 62, Folder: Pasha, S. E. Mohammed Taher, 1938, 1950-1970; Egypt.

⁴⁴ Minutes of the IOC Executive Board, 3 May 1954, Lausanne, Switzerland, IOCL, 2.

Brundage and the executive committee needed to overcome in order to gain support for the city.

A Swiss newspaper reporter spoke with Australian I.O.C. member Hugh Weir in May 1955, with the Melbourne Games quickly approaching in just over a year's time. Weir was cautiously optimistic that the Melbourne organizing committee would be ready to open the Games on time, saying that, "A great deal of work must still be done which gives an apprehension. Although I think that we are going to do it, we need energetic help."⁴⁵ What little trepidation remained present in Weir's opinion prompted an extraordinary gesture from Brundage, who was induced to make a trip to Australia to see the progress for himself.

Brundage decided to visit the organizing committee himself in 1955 to dispel the rumors regarding lack of development and to see the conditions of progress for himself. In a summary of his trip, Davison writes, "Brundage stormed into Melbourne, blasted the Games organisers for their unsatisfactory progress, and threatened to take the Games away if the organisers did not stop their bickering and delays."⁴⁶ Melbourne's self-confidence, "never strong," as Davison notes, was shaken by Brundage's blunt rebuke. That following June, however, Brundage reported at the 50th I.O.C. General Session in Paris that, ". . . the plans and programs shown to me seemed to be adequate and satisfactory . . . it appeared quite possible to carry out those plans in the eighteen months which remained before the opening of the Games."⁴⁷ However, he did note that the progress made in the six years that the organizing committee has had was "most unsatisfactory," not knowing how much more

⁴⁵ Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 23 May 1955, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1955.

⁴⁶ Davison, 70.

⁴⁷ Minutes of the 50th General Session of the IOC, Paris, France, 13-17 June 1955, 20, IOCL.

time and money would be needed to complete all of the installations, questions that “should have been settled years ago.”⁴⁸

Discussions regarding the viability of the city of Melbourne and the capability of its organizing committee to host the Games on time were not completely settled until the I.O.C. met again at its General Session at Cortina d’Ampezzo, Italy, in January 1956. Brundage expressed disappointment in noting that none of the members of the Melbourne organizing committee were in attendance for the last General Session leading up to the opening ceremonies later that year. However, Giorgio de Stefani, who visited Melbourne on behalf of the Italian National Committee, brought good news on their behalf and reported that, “. . . everything will be ready and in perfect order for the Olympic Games. The difficulties have been overcome and there is no further danger of strike.”⁴⁹ Although he agreed that the Australians were ready to host the Games the following November, he admitted that he made a rapid survey of the site in his four days in Melbourne, noting that it was “impossible to see everything in that short time.”⁵⁰

Challenges of Preparation for Equestrian Events

A major hurdle the Melbourne organizing committee had to overcome involved a quarantine on horses entering Australia, which would bar certain international athletes from competing in the equestrian events. The law mandated that only horses from New

⁴⁸ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁹ Minutes of the 50th General Session of the IOC, Cortina D’Ampezzo, Italy, 24-25 January 1956, 9, IOCL.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Zealand, the United Kingdom (U.K.), and Ireland were allowed into Australia without delay, while horses from other countries were required to spend six months in one of these countries beforehand.⁵¹ The quarantine was designed to prevent the introduction of several equine diseases that were common in other countries, but largely unknown in Australia. Pushback on this law was led by Japan, which pointed out that sending horses to these countries would be a “handicap to far eastern countries.”⁵² While some countries proposed that the event be moved to another country with more relaxed quarantine laws, the suggestion was initially shot down as it would have violated Article 29 of the Olympic Charter, which stipulated that “The events must all take place in or as near as possible to the city chosen and preferably at or near the Stadium.”⁵³

Brundage and Otto Mayer recognized the dilemma caused by the quarantine. As press reports criticizing the I.O.C.’s decision to hold the Games in Melbourne began to ramp up in relation to the law, Mayer felt strongly against holding the Games in Melbourne, telling Brundage, “We look absolutely stupid . . . Those Australian people do not deserve having the Games; probably that most of the population is against it and most of European N.O.C. have not the money [*sic*] to send important delegations there.”⁵⁴ Unsatisfied with the progress being made, top officials at the I.O.C. considered reducing or even eliminating

⁵¹ Associated Press, “Confirm Site of 1956 Olympics in Melbourne.”

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ International Olympic Committee, *Olympic Charter – Olympic Rules*, 1 January 1949, 13. Available at: https://stillmed.olympic.org/Documents/Olympic%20Charter/Olympic_Charter_through_time/1949-Olympic_Charter.pdf.

⁵⁴ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 26 February 1953, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 46, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Aug. 1, 1952 to June 30, 1953.

events in Melbourne at the April 1953 I.O.C. General Session in Mexico City, but despite his strong feelings, Mayer warned that a decision could not be taken in such haste.⁵⁵

At the 48th I.O.C. General Session held in Mexico City in April 1953, Brundage expressed his desire not to alter the rules set out in the Olympic Charter and considered either a cancellation of equestrian events or complete withdrawal of the 1956 Games from Melbourne.⁵⁶ Weir detested each of these options, maintaining that if the Games were withheld solely due to the absence of equestrian events, the “repercussion in Australia would be deplorable.”⁵⁷ Since the Olympic Charter was not to be changed, the discussion led to a vote of confidence on the Australian Organizing Committee, which was unanimously in favor of keeping the Games in Melbourne for the time being, leaving the equestrian question in the air until the next General Session to be held the following year in Athens.

With two years left before the opening ceremonies were scheduled to begin, tension hung in the air of the 49th I.O.C. General Session with the question of Australia’s capability of hosting the Games still present. Lord Burghley, an executive member of the I.O.C. from England, mentioned the sunk costs already invested into Melbourne by mentioning the “considerable sums” that had been spent on the organization of the Games.⁵⁸ He set in motion a proposal to break from the Olympic Charter and move only equestrian events to “another town,” which passed with 30 votes in favor, 13 against, and one abstention. The

⁵⁵ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 27 March 1953, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 46, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Aug. 1, 1952 to June 30, 1953.

⁵⁶ Minutes of the 48th General Session of the IOC, Mexico City, Mexico, 17-18, 20 April 1953, 12, IOCL.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Minutes of the 49th General Session of the IOC, Athens, Greece, 11-15 May 1954, 5, IOCL.

committee moved forward in deciding where to hold the equestrian sports, as Baron de Trannoy of Belgium opened the debate by pointing out which countries had held the most International Equestrian Federation (I.E.F.) competitions, noting that Sweden had hosted the most with five.⁵⁹ Nominations for alternative cities included Stockholm, Rio de Janeiro, Paris, Berlin, and Los Angeles. Following a secret ballot vote, 47 members voted with Stockholm receiving more than half the votes with 25.⁶⁰ The resulting action marked the first time that Article 29 was broken.

The events in Stockholm garnered the same notoriety and fanfare that a regular Summer Olympic Games opening ceremony would receive, with the King of Sweden declaring the opening of the “Equestrian Games.”⁶¹ Some members expressed disappointment in the move, including Angelo Bolanaki, who had been a French member of the I.O.C. since modern Olympic founder Pierre de Coubertin was the president of the organization. He abstained from attending the events in Stockholm, advising the I.O.C. leadership that, “it is absolutely necessary that we look forward to the future with steadiness, reflexion and without any personal interest, which are three qualities which have completely missed to us.”⁶² Ironically, the Australian Equestrian Team was hampered the most by the move to Stockholm, as its horses were subject to its own quarantine laws, requiring the horses to stay in England, Ireland or New Zealand before they could be

⁵⁹ Ibid., 15. The hosting nations are well distributed: Sweden (5 times), USSR (4), USA (4), Germany (3), Holland (3), Poland (2), Italy (2), Belgium (L), Mexico (1), Norway (1), and Great-Britain (1).

⁶⁰ The final vote count for the selection of the city to host equestrian events: Stockholm (25), Paris (10), Rio de Janeiro (8), Berlin (2), and Los Angeles (2).

⁶¹ “BARRING OF DUKE DENIED: Edinburgh Welcome at Games Opening, Brundage Says,” *New York Times*, Jul 28, 1956.

⁶² Angelo Bolanaki to Avery Brundage, 20 May 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 51, Folder: Bolanaki, Angelo, 1950-1964; France.

transported to Sweden.⁶³ Australia, as the host nation to the 1956 Games, was duty bound to send an equestrian team to compete in the event, its first ever appearance in the sport at the Olympic Games.

Near Boycott: Argentina

In September 1955, Argentinian President Juan Domingo Perón was deposed in a military coup known as the *Revolución Libertadora*, with General A. Lonardi Doucet assuming the presidency immediately following his removal. Lonardi fell fatally ill just months after his ascension and was later replaced by the despotic General Admiral Isaac Rojas. According to Latin Americanist historian David Rock, Rojas began a process of de-peronization, “vigorously purging Peronists from business, government and military posts.”⁶⁴ As a part of this process, he appointed General Fernando Huergo to the presidency of the Argentine Olympic Committee (COI) and the Argentine Confederation of Sport.

Following this coup d’état, Brundage received a letter from General Huergo confirming the change, recapping his message to Mayer, “. . .the Argentine Olympic Committee had to be reorganized and that he had been assigned by the Government to accomplish that task.”⁶⁵ Although the general stated that he was proceeding in accordance with Olympic rules, this meant that there was no official national Olympic committee in

⁶³ “Melbourne’s Plan,” Official Bid to host the 1956 Summer Olympic Games, n.d., Avery Brundage Collection, Box 162, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Official Invitation)

⁶⁴ David Rock, *Argentina 1516-1987: From Spanish Colonisation to Alfonsín* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 335, quoted in John Kennedy, “‘El Primer Crack’ of Argentine Basketball: Oscar Furlong,” *Irish Migration Studies in Latin America* 6, no. 1 (2008): 54.

⁶⁵ Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer, 23 August 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

Argentina, as the new government-controlled committee did not have recognition from the I.O.C. He continued to tell Mayer:

Nothing more was heard and apparently nothing was done. That meant there was no Olympic Committee in Argentina, so I suggested to the Melbourne Organizing Committee that it write to Buenos Aires and notify them that there was no recognized Olympic Committee on the list and therefore it would be impossible to accept an Argentine team.⁶⁶

Mayer warned Brundage that this action would result in backlash from the newly reformed Argentinian delegation, asking that he “At least . . . see that you apply the rules !!!!”⁶⁷ In discussions with the ambassador to Argentina, Mayer requested that in order to assure participation in Melbourne, the new delegation must have respect of the rules set out in the Olympic Charter and have “correct elections.”⁶⁸ Brundage clarified that there was no intention to place a ban on Argentina, but to “expedite the formation of a National Olympic Committee according to our rules.”⁶⁹ As long as the I.O.C. and the representatives from Argentina were on the same page, there would be no trouble admitting the athletes from the country to participate in Melbourne.

⁶⁶ Ibid.; The 6th Marquess of Exeter (formerly known as Lord Burghley) mentioned having friends in Buenos Aires that had monitored the situation closely, mirroring the remarks that Brundage made in this statement. He told Brundage, “After the Revolution, the government placed a General in charge of the Olympic Committee with the task of reorganizing it properly. This reorganizing was being carried out in line with our rules, but very slowly, it seemed. I had the Organizing Committee write and tell them that there was no Argentine Olympic Committee on the approved list, with the idea of letting them know we were watching the situation and with the hope of expediting the reorganization.” For more, see Avery Brundage to David Cecil, 7 September 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 55, Folder: Exeter, Marquess David, former Lord Burghley, 1952-1959.

⁶⁷ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, n.d., Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

⁶⁸ Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer, 6 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

⁶⁹ Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer, 21 August 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

Relations between the I.O.C. and the Olympic representatives from Argentina took a turn for the worse when the Associated Press misconstrued statements from Mayer, reporting that Argentina's participation in the 1956 Games was in doubt, ". . . because the Argentine Government has destituted [*sic*] and put in prison (former chairman of the Argentine Olympic Committee) Dr. Rodolpho Valenzuela. He was arrested because he was a Peron's man. Also the other members of the Argentine Olympic Committee have been withdrawn from the Committee as being Peronists."⁷⁰ Mayer denied saying this, admitting that he did not know that Valenzuela was in prison. The damage had been done, however, as Brundage and Mayer became synonymous with Peronists, creating a negative image of the I.O.C. in post-Peronist Argentina.

The I.O.C. had problems of its own with the national sporting federations in Argentina as well. Gaston Mullegg, the president of the World Rowing Federation (FISA), confided to Mayer that the Argentine rowing team would be barred from competing in Melbourne by the authority of FISA as it did not follow the Amateur Statute. Mullegg provided proof that the team had, ". . . transgressed the amateur rules . . . all rowing people of Argentine have received big amount of money, the leaders of the Federation knowing it."⁷¹ In addition, a situation regarding the Argentine Cyclist Federation was "not in order" as the federation seemingly mixed up payments between amateurs and professionals, which threatened its participation in Melbourne.⁷²

⁷⁰ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 27 August 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

⁷¹ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 11 September 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

⁷² Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 18 October 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

One of the members of the executive council, Lord Burghley, caught wind of the Argentine situation in the media and mailed Brundage to clarify his position on the matter of participation. Lord Burghley mentioned that the federations in the country were, “. . . fully paid up members of the I.A.A.F. and are eligible for competition in our World Championships,” and also noted that the decision could not be made purely on “political control, for that reason not one of the Iron Curtain countries, including Russia, would be eligible to compete in Melbourne.”⁷³ Given Brundage’s philosophy against intertwining politics and the Olympic Games, Lord Burghley’s advice may have pushed Brundage further towards Argentina’s ultimate participation.

This damage would not last long, as the COI took the proactive steps suggested by Mayer to become recognized as a National Olympic Committee by holding elections in early September of 1956.⁷⁴ Although this progress came with the Olympic Games in Melbourne set to begin in mere months, the I.O.C. supported a proposition to streamline Argentina’s acceptance to the Games in coordination with the Melbourne organizing committee. Following this revelation, Mayer concluded, “I am glad that our rules were respected and that we were the strongest.”⁷⁵ This situation would only be a taste of what was to come regarding the future participation of national Olympic committees around the world in the 1956 Summer Olympic Games in Melbourne, and the feeling of victory would be fleeting in the coming months.

⁷³ David Cecil to Avery Brundage, 10 August 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 55, Folder: Exeter, Marquess David, former Lord Burghley, 1952-1959.

⁷⁴ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 28 August 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Chapter 3: The “Two Chinas” Problem

The boycott taken by the People’s Republic of China (PRC) at the 1956 Summer Olympic Games in Melbourne requires some background information to understand the split between it and the Republic of China (Taiwan), which was the only Chinese delegation recognized at the time. The “Two Chinas” problem has been covered extensively in the existing literature, but the problem in relation to the 1956 Melbourne Summer Olympic Games has not been expanded upon at length.⁷⁶

The Republic of China was established in 1912 and was originally represented by three I.O.C. members. C.T. Wang, who was active in Chinese sports due to his involvement in the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA), was co-opted by the I.O.C. in 1922. The second man was Kung Hsiang-hsi (H.H. Kung), who had been co-opted in 1939 following his tenancy as the Premier of the Republic of China (Taiwan), a position he used in “. . . a vain attempt to secure more government financial support for sports.”⁷⁷ The third member, Professor Shou-Yi Dong (Dong Shouyi), assumed his place as the secretary of the newly-formed Chinese Olympic Committee in Shanghai in 1946. Dong had spent two

⁷⁶ Susan Brownell, “Sport and Politics Don’t Mix: China’s Relationship with the IOC during the Cold War,” in *East Plays West: Sport in the Cold War*, eds. Stephen Wagg and David L. Andrew (New York: Routledge, 2007), 253-271; Xu Guoqi, *Olympic Dreams: China and Sports, 1895-2008* (London: Harvard University Press, 2008); Gerald Chan, “The “Two-Chinas” Problem and the Olympic Formula,” *Pacific Affairs* 58, no. 3 (1985), 473-490; Allen Guttmann, *The Games Must Go On – Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement*; Fan Hong and Lo Zhouxiang, *The Politicisation of Sport in Modern China: Communists and Champions* (London: Routledge, 2013); Tan Hua and Dong Erzhi, *Suyuan – Dong Shouyi Zhuan [Long-Cherished Wish – The Story of Dong Shouyi]* (Beijing: People’s Sports Publishing House, 1993); Donggueng Pei, ““A Question of Names’: The Two Chinas Issue and the People’s Republic of China in the Modern Olympic Movement” (PhD diss., The University of Western Ontario, 1995); Brain B. Pendleton, “The People’s Republic of China and the Olympic Movement: A Question of Recognition” (PhD diss., The University of Alberta, 1978); Richard W. Pound, “Side-Swiped: the IOC and the China Issue at the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games,” *Journal of Olympic History* 20 (2012): 11-32.

⁷⁷ Hua and Erzhi, 96.

years at Springfield College in Massachusetts before being co-opted in 1947, when he assumed the position of General Secretary of the China National Amateur Athletic Federation. Dong was later elected to the I.O.C. as a member that same year.

The Chinese Communist Revolution dominated the global political landscape following World War II, which ultimately split the government of China in two. On October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong proclaimed the establishment of the People's Republic of China on mainland China. Chiang Kai-shek, representing the losing Kuomintang side, retreated with 600,000 Nationalist troops and about two million Nationalist-sympathizer refugees to the island of Taiwan. With the Nationalists, most Chinese athletic organizations, including the National Olympic Committee and its archives, had relocated their headquarters to the island of Taiwan.⁷⁸ H.H. Kung, who preceded Chiang Kai-Shek as the Premier of the Republic of China, and C.T. Wang retreated to Taiwan with the Kuomintang quickly following the defeat.

While the two regimes briefly maintained diplomatic relations from the onset of the split, each claimed to be the legitimate government of all of China and remained in a state of mutual hostility.⁷⁹ Both the PRC and Taiwan adhered to the "One China" principle, which stated that no expression of Taiwanese separatism or the existence of "Two Chinas" could be tolerated. For the PRC, this meant that in international organizations, including the International Olympic Committee, the "Chiang clique" must first be expelled before

⁷⁸ Avery Brundage to E.J. Holt, 15 May 1952, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 120, Folder: China, People's Republic of China (Olympic Committee, 1952, 1954, 1959-60, 1964).

⁷⁹ Brownell, 255. Brownell notes that Taiwan held a seat in the United Nations until the PRC's admission in 1971.

the mainland could consider entering because “the simultaneous membership of both Taiwan and the PRC would be an expression of ‘two Chinas.’”⁸⁰

Despite the urging of his friends to leave the mainland, Dong remained in Peking and had helped to found another Chinese Olympic Committee on the mainland in 1951.⁸¹ The transfer of the committee from the mainland, however, left the Chinese communists without a recognized body by the I.O.C., as the recognized committee was now on the island of Taiwan. Rule 45 of the Olympic Charter stated that “Only National Olympic Committees can enter competitors” to the Olympic Games, which the mainland was also now largely without.⁸² Brundage concluded that recognition could not be granted to Dong’s new delegation on the mainland by the I.O.C. unless the new government held memberships in the international federations of sports represented at the Games, but he asserted that the situation was, “so complicated that it should be postponed for consideration at the Congress in Helsinki.”⁸³

Rule 45 reflects original modern Olympic ideals. For Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic movement, the concept of the Olympic Games was rooted in a spirit of “all games, all nations.”⁸⁴ In a dispute over the participation of Bohemia and Finland in the 1912 Games, Coubertin reminded each delegation that there existed a “sports geography” that was “distinct from the political geography,” thus preferring the two

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 256.

⁸² Magazine Article, Thomas de Márffy-Mantuano, “Horses and Exiles,” 28 May 1954, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 116, Folder: Exiles, 1950-64.

⁸³ Avery Brundage to E.J. Holt, 15 May 1952, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 120, Folder: China, People’s Republic of China (Olympic Committee, 1952, 1954, 1959-60, 1964).

⁸⁴ Pierre de Coubertin, *Olympic Memoirs* (Lausanne: International Olympic Committee, 1997), 126.

delegations to participate as independent entities.⁸⁵ This ideology persisted throughout much of the twentieth century, as the I.O.C. claimed it only recognized national Olympic committees, not nation-states. Heated disputes surrounding the memberships of the delegations from Beijing and Taiwan plagued the international Olympic movement for years, and became so serious that Otto Mayer complained, “The quarrel of the ‘two Chinas’ has been . . . the main burden of Olympism.”⁸⁶

The China Problem attracted the concern of many different actors in the international sporting environment, including Mr. Karl August Larsson, the Secretary General of the Swedish shooting federation, who inquired to Otto Mayer about the situation. Following the Helsinki Olympic Games, Mayer conceded to Larsson that, “. . . we are of the opinion that one day or another we shall be compelled to recognize the [committee] of Peking, without any consideration of politics of course.”⁸⁷ However, in what would be the main issue between the two Chinese delegations and the I.O.C., he included that the delegation from Taiwan would not agree to this, as “. . . they want to be considered as being the only CHINESE body.”⁸⁸ This sentiment was duly shared by the PRC, setting up a long debate on how to settle the issue for future events.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 138.

⁸⁶ Gutmann, *The Games Must Go On: Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement*, 145.

⁸⁷ Otto Mayer to Karl August Larsson, 28 December 1953, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 46, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), July 1, 1953 to June 30, 1954.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

Sigfrid Edström and the 1952 Helsinki Summer Olympic Games

Taiwanese opposition to the recognition of a committee from the People's Republic of China had been steadfast since the Nationalists' exile. H.H. Kung, the premier of the Republic of China and a representative of the Taiwanese Olympic delegation, reasoned to Otto Mayer that the committee should, ". . . consider that the National Government is still the legal government of China, and the one recognised by the United Nations."⁸⁹ Leading up to the 1952 Summer Olympic Games in Helsinki, Finland, the delegation from the Taiwan was gearing up to participate, being the only Chinese committee recognized by the I.O.C.⁹⁰ While its anticipated participation did not appear to be in doubt, the PRC delegation did not have official recognition from the I.O.C. and were not allowed to compete. Sigfrid Edström affirmed to the All-China Athletic Federation through telegram that athletes from the federation "may not participate" after the federation claimed it sent all entries "according to relevant instructions on time and received identity cards."⁹¹

The PRC had never participated in the Olympic Games prior to the 1952 Helsinki Summer Olympic Games. On February 1, 1952, Finland's ambassador to China informed Mao Zedong's government in China that Finland wished the Chinese to take part in their Olympic Games. As soon as China received this news, according to scholar Donggueng Pei, it reacted "quickly and positively," cabling the I.O.C. with the indication of its desire

⁸⁹ H.H. Kung to Otto Mayer, 16 May 1952, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 120, Folder: Republic of China, Olympic Committee (Taiwan), 1952-1961.

⁹⁰ Minutes of the 47th General Session of the IOC, Helsinki, Finland, 16-18, 28 July 1952, 7, IOCL.

⁹¹ Account of Exchange of telegram between the President of the International Olympic Committee, J. Sigfrid Edström, and The All China Athletic Federation, 15-21 June 1952, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 120, Folder: China, People's Republic of China (Olympic Committee, 1952, 1954, 1959-60, 1964).

to participate.⁹² The day after the invitation was received, China's representative at the Chinese embassy, Zheng Chi Pai, confirmed the PRC's desire to participate, thus spearheading the new organization's first intention at participating as an adherent of the Olympic Movement. Despite receiving confirmation from Finland, the body was not yet recognized by the I.O.C., which would hold the final say in whether the nation could send a team to participate.

The intentions of the Finland ambassador matched those of the 1952 Helsinki Olympic organizing committee. Mr. Erik von Frenckell, an I.O.C. member from Finland and an instrumental figure that helped clinch Helsinki's 1952 Olympic bid, wanted to see the PRC team competing at the Games in his country. In a letter dated May 29, 1952, from Edström to Vice President Avery Brundage, Edström told Brundage that von Frenckell was “. . . anxious to have both East Germany and China to take part [in the Games].”⁹³ Von Frenckell stirred confusion within the I.O.C. and between the two Chinese organizations when he notified Brundage of a “misunderstanding” regarding invitations to the Games. Recognition of the PRC in the sports of soccer, basketball and swimming by FIFA, FIBA and FINA, respectively, coerced the country's organizing body to petition to the Helsinki organizing committee to participate in the upcoming Games. While von Frenckell sided with the I.O.C. in recognizing that only I.O.C. members could receive invitations to the Games, the Finnish member accidentally sent the invitation to the delegation in Peking.⁹⁴

⁹² Pei, 54.

⁹³ Sigfrid Edström to Avery Brundage, 29 May 1952, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 43, Folder: Edström, J. Sigfrid (1950-1954).

⁹⁴ In a letter to Edström dated June 19, 1952, von Frenckell noted miscommunication as the chief reason for the mistake in sending the invitation to the PRC committee. He tells Edström, “. . .the change of address [*sic*] of the Chinese Olympic Committee from Peking to Taiwan has been a mistake not confirmed by the

Later correspondence between Edström and Brundage on June 30 confirmed this mistake, but Edström believed the action to be intentional, presuming that von Frenckell may have been “tortured to give his signature” in sending out “secret invitations.”⁹⁵ Amidst the confusion, representatives from each Chinese delegation were invited to speak at Helsinki to make each of their cases to be included in the Olympic activities.

At the I.O.C. General Session in Helsinki on July 17, 1952, just two days before the opening ceremonies, the Executive Committee had originally taken the decision to suggest to the General Session not to authorize either Chinese party to participate in the Games. But Edström opened the floor to the General Session to decide only between including or excluding both the Taiwan and PRC delegations, but not either or.⁹⁶ Representatives from Taiwan and Peking were both introduced to speak regarding each of their delegations’ eligibilities to the I.O.C.

Gunsun Hoh, the President of the Chinese Olympic Committee based in Taiwan, emphasized the current association with the I.O.C. and current participation of the athletes from the island as reasons to remain recognized by the organization. Mr. Sheng Chir Pai, the representative for the PRC delegation, largely based his appeal for recognition on, “Speaking in the name of 400 million inhabitants,” and further argued that the Nationalist Chinese Committee was, “. . . composed of refugees . . . by no means, representing the Chinese Nation.”⁹⁷ Mr. Sheng lodged a protest against the Taiwan committee having been

Executive Committee nor by the Congress.” See Erik von Frenckell to Sigfrid Edström, 19 June 1952, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 43, Folder: Edström, J. Sigfrid (1950-1954).

⁹⁵ Sigfrid Edström to Avery Brundage, 30 June 1952, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 43, Folder: Edström, J. Sigfrid (1950-1954).

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Minutes of the 47th General Session of the IOC, Helsinki, Finland, 16-18, 28 July 1952, 8, IOCL.

issued an invitation to the Helsinki Games while also calling for its immediate withdrawal, which was fought back by Edström, asserting that “The I.O.C. takes all its decisions in complete independence,” which was treated with “loud cheers from the Assembly.”⁹⁸

Later that day, following a long discussion, a compromise proposal was approved by a 29-22 margin in which neither national Olympic committee was recognized. Each, however was allowed to compete in the sports in which its national governing body was recognized by the respective international federation.⁹⁹ The Taiwan delegation decided to reject the idea out of the notion of *han zei bu liang li*, or “no two Chinas.”¹⁰⁰ Its decision not to participate in the Games allowed the PRC to participate as the sole delegation from the Chinese nation, sending 40 athletes to Helsinki on July 29, a mere five days before the closing ceremony.

In a letter to Edström following the Games in Helsinki, Gunsun Hoh accused the I.O.C. that the action not to recognize either delegation was both illegal and a *de facto* repudiation of dictatorial order against the Taiwanese delegation. The actions of the I.O.C. were expressed with “profound regret,” and Hoh told Brundage that, “. . . your action has brought about a series of events which have undermined the sanctity of the Olympic rules and marred the otherwise perfectly harmonious atmosphere of the Helsinki Games.”¹⁰¹ Brundage responded with the excuse that the PRC committee already had a team in

⁹⁸ Ibid., 9.

⁹⁹ Ibid. 10; François Piétri of France originally developed this notion that neither national Olympic committee be recognized but that both Chinas be allowed to compete in Helsinki, each in the sports for which its national federation had international recognition. This proposal passed with 33 votes. For more, see Guttman, *The Games Must Go On – Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement*, 144.

¹⁰⁰ Guoqi, 88.

¹⁰¹ Gunsun Hoh to Sigfrid Edström, 31 July 1952, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 120, Folder: Republic of China, Olympic Committee (Taiwan), 1952-1961.

Helsinki before the vote was taken, and “the Committee weakened and gave them permission to compete.”¹⁰² Each party would have its share of blame to distribute and the transpiring of events in Helsinki would influence the course of discussions leading up to the next Olympiad.

Avery Brundage and the 1956 Melbourne Summer Olympic Games

In his first involvement with the problem between the two nations as the president of the I.O.C., Brundage stressed his personal ideology upon the situation, wanting to keep politics and the Olympic Movement separated from each other. According to Yuxiang Hao, Avery Brundage “. . . pushed both parties so hard not to talk politics that it virtually became a non-starter for solving the Two Chinas Question during his presidency.”¹⁰³ His ideal of apolitical sport infuriated both parties, and given that the PRC could not tolerate the creation of two Chinas, the situation seemed doomed from the start.¹⁰⁴ Despite this, Brundage and Mayer would involve themselves in assuring the participation of as many athletes as possible for the 1956 Games, even if it meant recognizing two committees.

Leading up to the 1956 Summer Olympic Games in Melbourne, Beijing not only declared that it would attend the Games, but it also pressed its athletes to prepare. A front-

¹⁰² Avery Brundage to H.H. Kung, 24 February 1953, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 120, Folder: Republic of China, Olympic Committee (Taiwan), 1952-1961.

¹⁰³ Yuxiang Hao, “The International Olympic Committee Faced with Political Interference: Winning the Battle between the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of China, 1952-1979” (master’s thesis, University of Texas at Austin, 2015), 32.

¹⁰⁴ An interesting perspective of the Chinese approach to international affairs comes from Donggueng Pei, who details that since the PRC had been closed to the outside world for a prolonged period, it “. . . considered itself as the centre of the world and, in effect, became unfamiliar with the rest of the world. Its method of dealing with international affairs was in traditional ways, ways that were out of date and unrealistic in modern times.” For more, see Pei, 80.

page editorial in the *People's Daily* published on September 2 of that year, titled “Let’s go to the Olympic Games,” called on Chinese athletes to get ready and “win victories for the motherland at the 16th Olympic Games.”¹⁰⁵ In an emotional statement from one of China’s most powerful newspapers, *Ren Ming Ri Bao*, seconded this call as athletes from both Taiwan and the PRC, asking them to “. . . respond to this patriotic call and overcome all difficulties and obstruction in their struggle . . . take part in the contest for the sake of glory of the fatherland and the cause of sports, as well as the prospects of going to Melbourne.”¹⁰⁶ Despite this plea, and since the Taiwan committee was still technically recognized by the I.O.C. despite its withdrawal from the 1952 Games, it remained the sole representative of the Olympic family, while the delegation in Peking, despite its participation in the Helsinki Games, did not have the status of a recognized committee.

The topic of the “Two Chinas” problem engulfed discussions, both in I.O.C. sessions and in private discussions between I.O.C. members. At the General Meeting in Mexico City in April 1953, Brundage expressed the opinion that the organization, “. . . cannot recognize these Committees today, before being fully conversant with their organizations, their Rules and Statutes.”¹⁰⁷ A key breakthrough came at the May 1954 session of the I.O.C., as discussion of the recognition of the PRC committee began with a promising report from Dr. Ferenc Mezö, a member from Hungary. He informed the assembly that the Secretary of the Hungarian Olympic Committee, who was also the managing director of the Hungarian national football team, had spent ten months in China

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁰⁷ Minutes of the 48th General Session of the IOC, Mexico City, Mexico, 17-18, 20 April 1953, 25-26, IOCL.

and found that the continental Chinese sporting conditions were “extremely up to date . . . the expansion of sport in that country is striking.”¹⁰⁸ Dr. Mezö further recommended the recognition of the PRC committee, with affirmations from Bulgarian member General Stoitchev and Mr. Andrianov of the U.S.S.R. delegation. Following the motion of a vote by Brundage on the candidatures of the PRC and five other committees,¹⁰⁹ the Olympic Committee of the PRC passed by a narrow 23-21 margin.¹¹⁰ After hearing word of the vote, Taiwan reportedly withdrew from the I.O.C.¹¹¹

The delegation from Taiwan was visibly upset with the decision to recognize the PRC.¹¹² In response to a telegraph received from the members of Taiwan, I.O.C. Chancellor Otto Mayer told Brundage that he thought the Nationalist Chinese committee, “. . . make a little bit too much politics . . . it is not their business to dictate us who should be invited or not.”¹¹³ In response to Taiwan’s calamitous protests, Brundage pointed out

¹⁰⁸ Minutes of the 49th General Session of the IOC, Athens, Greece, 11-15 May 1954, 24, IOCL.

¹⁰⁹ Ethiopia (44-2), the Dominican Republic (34-6), Malaysia (36-6), and Costa Rica (36-6) were each confirmed to be recognized by the I.O.C. at the 1954 General Session. East Germany (14-31) was not recognized.

¹¹⁰ According to Douglas F. Roby, vice president of the United States Olympic Committee, Avery Brundage declared the vote to be “almost unanimous.” However, Roby disputed the claims in the American news media, stating that he could not “agree with Mr. Brundage’s statement that the vote on this action was practically unanimous.” For more, see Newspaper Clipping, “Dispute Brundage on China Vote Ban,” 10 June 1954, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 120, Folder: China, People’s Republic of China (Olympic Committee, 1952, 1954, 1959-60, 1964).

¹¹¹ Newspaper Clipping, “Red China in Olympics; E. Zone Out,” 15 May 1954, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 120, Folder: China, People’s Republic of China (Olympic Committee, 1952, 1954, 1959-60, 1964); “Red China Admitted to Olympics; Nationalists Withdraw at Once,” *New York Times*, May 14, 1954.

¹¹² In a telegram sent to the I.O.C., the Nationalist Chinese Committee cited that the decision to invite the PRC delegation would, “. . . make Games unworthy of glorious history of Olympic Movement” due to its violations of Rules 7 and 25 of the Olympic charter. For more, see Telegram, Chinese National Olympic Committee to IOC, n.d., Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1955; International Olympic Committee. *Olympic Charter – Olympic Rules*, 1 January 1949.

¹¹³ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 21 December 1954, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), July 1, 1954 to Dec. 31, 1954.

two reasons why the acceptance of the PRC occurred. First, the rationale for the PRC's inclusion rested on the first fundamental principle of the I.O.C., which was that, "no discrimination is allowed against any country or person on grounds of color, religion and politics."¹¹⁴ Second, in a letter from Brundage to the delegation in Taiwan, he recognized the absence of the two members from the delegation at the 1954 session and told them that the vote had been 23 to 21. He wrote to the committee that, "If Doctors [C.T.] Wang and [H.K.] Kung had been present, undoubtedly the result would have been different."¹¹⁵ The Chinese Olympic Committee fell short of excuses following this justification, as Wang blamed his old age for limiting his mobility to attend meetings and Kung did not cite a reason for his absence, but had expressed difficulties obtaining travel permits and accommodations for his health on planes.¹¹⁶

Seeking to overturn this decision made by members of the I.O.C., Gunsun Hoh and the rest of the Taiwanese committee accepted the rationale of Rule 1 of the Olympic Charter and shifted their focus to other means of convincing the I.O.C. to eliminate the PRC team from the upcoming 1956 Summer Olympic Games in Melbourne. Gunsun

¹¹⁴ Otto Mayer to Chinese Olympic Committee, 6 January 1955, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1955.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ C.T. Wang to Avery Brundage, 3 May 1954, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 120, Folder: Republic of China, Olympic Committee (Taiwan), 1952-1961; H.H. Kung to Avery Brundage, 24 June 1955, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 120, Folder: Republic of China, Olympic Committee (Taiwan), 1952-1961; This became an issue within the administration of the I.O.C. According to Rule 11 of the Olympic Charter, "A member who does not attend any meeting or who does not take any active part in Committee affairs for four years, or who has not paid his subscription for three years, or who by reason of circumstances that may arise is not in a position properly to carry out his duties as a member of the International Olympic Committee shall be considered to have resigned, unless the Committee otherwise decide." Otto Mayer noted in November 1953 that both C.T. Wang, a member from the mainland Chinese delegation, and Dr. H.H. Kung from Taiwan had extended absences of at least five years. For more, see Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 20 November 1953, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 46, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), July 1, 1953 to June 30, 1954.

claimed that athletic organizations and activities were under government control while athletes receiving subsidy from their government were used as tools for political purposes. If true, this would have been a violation of Rule 7 under the Olympic Charter, which states that “Only persons who are amateurs within the definition laid down in these Rules may compete in the Olympic Games.”¹¹⁷ Mr. Hoh appealed, “The admission of Communist China to the Olympic Games undoubtedly encourages the further development of professionalism and state amateurism of which the bad influences are now spreading farther and farther way to destroy the spirit and traditions of the Olympic Games.”¹¹⁸ In response to this allegation, Brundage responded again with the reminder of how the 23-21 vote could have been different with the inclusion of its members if they were present, adding that, “I fail to see how anything can be done to prevent them from participating at Melbourne, unless it can be proved that they are not following the Olympic rules and regulations.”¹¹⁹

At the I.O.C. General Session in Athens in May 1954, it was decided that both Chinese National Olympic Committees would be recognized by the I.O.C., and both teams received invitations for the upcoming games later that year.¹²⁰ The Republic of China rescinded its withdrawal from the international organization and accepted its invitation to

¹¹⁷ International Olympic Committee. *Olympic Charter – Olympic Rules*, 1 January 1949, 8.

¹¹⁸ Gunsun Hoh to Avery Brundage, 30 August 1954, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 120, Folder: Republic of China, Olympic Committee (Taiwan), 1952-1961.

¹¹⁹ Avery Brundage to Gunsun Hoh, 16 September 1954, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 120, Folder: Republic of China, Olympic Committee (Taiwan), 1952-1961.

¹²⁰ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 14 June 1954, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 46, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), July 1, 1953 to June 30, 1954; Chinese National Olympic Committee (Taiwan) to IOC, n.d., Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1955.

participate in the 1956 Summer Olympic Games in December 1955.¹²¹ Upon receiving confirmation that both Chinese teams entered athletes for the Melbourne Games, Brundage sternly reminded the committees that the Games were “non-commercial and non-political” and that the demonstration of politics of any kind “will result in the disqualification of the offending team.”¹²²

While Taiwan was lodging a protest against the authorization of the PRC, the PRC’s own agenda included the issue of removing the recognition status of the Nationalist Chinese committee. Before the 50th I.O.C. General Session in Paris in 1955, the PRC delegation engaged in “extensive preparations” to present the case for recognizing only its delegation and expelling Taiwan.¹²³ In a move that triggered Brundage and went against the protocol of the General Session, Dong had an interpreter on hand to assist in these preparations.¹²⁴ The delegation from Peking, however, started off on the wrong foot with a politically charged statement to Avery Brundage. PRC representative Rong Gaotang started his argument by explaining the Chinese position that Taiwan was only a province of China, but Brundage immediately silenced him by stating that it was a political discussion that did not concern the I.O.C.”¹²⁵ In response, Rong accusingly replied that Brundage himself was engaging in politics by dividing the Chinese Olympic Committee in

¹²¹ News Release, Organizing Committee of the XVI Olympiad, December 1955, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (News Releases, Australian News and Information Bureau).

¹²² Avery Brundage to Chinese Olympic Committee (Taiwan), 6 August 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 120, Folder: Republic of China, Olympic Committee (Taiwan), 1952-1961.

¹²³ Susan Brownell, “Sport and Politics Don’t Mix: China’s Relationship with the IOC during the Cold War,” In *East Plays West: Sport in the Cold War*, edited by Stephen Wagg and David L Andrew (New York: Routledge, 2007): 259.

¹²⁴ Meeting_Minutes_51st_IOC_Session_at_Paris_1955_eng, 69.

¹²⁵ Brownell, 259.

two. After seeking the advice of Soviet representative Constantin Andrianov, Rong was advised that outbursts such as these would risk expulsion of the Peking committee.

Brundage later addressed I.O.C. members in Paris by characterizing the remarks as a “misunderstanding,” noting that it was Rong’s first appearance at an Olympic assembly. Brundage shrugged off the man’s intentions despite the I.O.C.’s rules banning “questions of a political nature,” saying that he, “. . . excused his violation of our rules on the assumption that he was not aware of them and I expressed the hope that this was a precedent which should never occur again.”¹²⁶

Dong Shouyi attempted to rectify the situation by sending a letter to member of the I.O.C. highlighting the progress of the popularity of sport in his country, expressing that he could, “. . . not but be filled with excitement and pride at the tremendous development of sports among the 600 million Chinese people who constitute one fourth of the world population.”¹²⁷ In the same letter, however, he called for the disapproval of the Taiwanese delegation to be recognized by the body, declaring that it should be a provincial organization under the leadership of an All-China Athletic Federation.¹²⁸ Attempting to keep politics out of his statement, he professed his thoughts “in the Olympic spirit” and referenced the ideals of the Olympic Charter.

On September 1, 1956, the China News Agency reported from Peking that athletes from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao had been notified to take part in “National Tryouts”

¹²⁶ Minutes of the 50th General Session of the IOC, Paris, France, 13-17 June 1955, 20, IOCL.

¹²⁷ Shou-Yi Tung to the “Members of the International Olympic Committee,” January 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 64, Folder: Tung, Shou-yi, 1956-1959; People’s Republic of China.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

to be held in Peking for the formation of an all-Chinese Olympic team.¹²⁹ The announcement was made by deputy director of the Chinese Preparatory Committee for Participation in the Sixteenth Olympic Games, Jung Kao-tang, for citizens in the provinces of mainland China to receive an opportunity to compete at the 1956 Games. The program was characterized as a protest on behalf of the PRC committee's failure to recognize the legitimacy of the Olympic teams from the regions invited.¹³⁰ Upon hearing this, I.O.C. Chancellor Otto Mayer mailed the committee on mainland China and told them that, "It has been understood that your intervention serves no purpose than political maneuvers" and that the matter would be discussed at the full Session of the I.O.C. at Melbourne in November.¹³¹

From Taiwan, the Chinese National Olympic Committee attempted yet again to appeal to the I.O.C. to revoke the participation of the delegation from the People's Republic of China. In October 1956, Chou Chi-jou, the new chairman of the Chinese Olympic Committee in Taiwan, was able to present "concrete evidence" to the I.O.C. following the announcement of the tryouts that the PRC committee should be barred from the upcoming Olympic Games.¹³² Refusal to recognize the Taiwanese delegation, the politicization of

¹²⁹ News Release, "APPENDIX ONE," 2 September 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 64, Folder: Tung, Shou-yi, 1956-1959; People's Republic of China.

¹³⁰ Ibid.; In the news conference announcing the tryout, Yung Kao-tang, the deputy director of the Chinese Preparatory Committee for Participation in the XVI Olympic Games, told a reporter that "Taiwan still hoists the flag of the China National Amateur Athletic Federation which has long ceased to exist," and "...ever since 1910 Chinese athlete in Hongkong and Macao have been taking part in China's national sports competitions." For more, see Ibid.

¹³¹ Otto Mayer to the People's Republic of China Olympic Committee, 7 October 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 64, Folder: Tung, Shou-yi, 1956-1959; People's Republic of China.

¹³² H.H. Kung resigned from his post as chairman, citing "a series of circumstances" relating to health and travel issues. For more, see H.H. Kung to Avery Brundage, 24 June 1955, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 120, Folder: Republic of China, Olympic Committee (Taiwan), 1952-1961.

Jung Kao-tang's statement to the press, and allegations of professionalism were all cited in the Taiwanese argument, with copies of documentary evidence enclosed with the appeal.

On October 22, Jung Kao-tang questioned the "political maneuvers" that were involved in his country's request to hold these tryouts, and informed the I.O.C. that "more than 100 athletes" had arrived in Peking to participate in the trials.¹³³ In the same correspondence, Jung asserted that the I.O.C.:

. . . committed a serious mistake which would greatly impair its honour and reputation, because the I.O.C. has no right to interfere in any problem which concerns a National Olympic Committee and its local organisations . . . The question between the Chinese Olympic Committee (All-China Athletic Federation) and the sports organization in Taiwan should be solved by us Chinese and we are completely capable to do so.¹³⁴

At this point in time, the delegation was "actively preparing to participate in the 16th Olympic Games," but a formal order calling for the I.O.C. to "immediately withdraw the right given to the sports organization in Taiwan to send athletes to participate separately in the 16th Olympic Games" was made official and would likely be discussed as a major topic at the upcoming Session in Melbourne.¹³⁵

The issue of the politicization of the Two China problem is an interesting issue, mainly because the leadership of both Chinese delegations were reprimanded continuously by the I.O.C. brass, yet their attempts to bar one another from participating in the Games always went to ridiculous lengths to protest the other's participation. For example, the PRC committee sent a letter to the I.O.C. arguing that "We are strongly opposed and protest

¹³³ Jung Kao-tang to Otto Mayer, 22 October 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 64, Folder: Tung, Shou-yi, 1956-1959; People's Republic of China.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

about the wrong manner of the I.O.C. to consider the Chinese problem.”¹³⁶ Although the protest was directed toward the I.O.C., the proposed solution by the Peking committee was “. . . to cancel immediately the right of the so-called sport’s organization of Taiwan.”¹³⁷ It is not surprising to find out that when Otto Mayer read this appeal, he wrote to Brundage “Of course I don’t reply.” The dispute between the two entities had distinctively crept from the political sphere into the sporting sphere, and national bias overwhelmed reason in disputes between the committees.

As November approached, with the opening ceremonies slated to begin on November 22, the Democratic Chinese Olympic Committee (PRC) would go to extraordinary lengths to convince the I.O.C. to recognize the “One China” principle. Just before the flags of all participating nations were to be raised at Melbourne’s Olympic Village on October 29, a “mysterious Red Chinese figure” had tricked the hosting organizing committee to switch the Nationalist Kuomintang flag, representing Taiwan, with the scarlet banner with five golden stars representing the People’s Republic of China.

Immediately recognizing this error, Nationalist Chinese officials, “hurried to the pole and hauled it down, raising in its place their own banner.”¹³⁸ Gunsun Hoh told an Associated Press reporter that, “If it had not been a mistake, we would immediately have

¹³⁶ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 22 October 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Carl Posey, n.p.; This incident is confirmed in Mayer’s letters to Brundage. See Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer, 6 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956; Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 30 January 1958, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 48, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), 1958.

withdrawn from the games.”¹³⁹ Despite this deliberative endeavor, Jung Kao-tang and the PRC delegation painted themselves as the ones being victimized by the Melbourne Organizing Committee. In a telegraph to Brundage, Jung told the I.O.C. President, “. . . at the Opening Ceremony in the Olympic Village hoisted the flag of the Kuomintang clique . . . All this not only seriously violates the traditions of the Olympic Movement and the Charter of the Olympic Games, it is a great insult to the 600 million Chinese people and all Chinese athletes against which we are bound to pledge our firm protest.”¹⁴⁰

The source of the Peking delegation’s protests, which led to its ultimate withdrawal from the XVI Olympiad in Melbourne, was the way each Chinese delegation would be recognized at the Games. As early as June of 1956, the issue of recognizing each of the Chinese delegations became an issue, particularly in how each delegation’s home nation should be specifically named.¹⁴¹ E.J. “Billy” Holt, the technical director of the 1956 Summer Olympics organizing committee, mailed Brundage to confirm that the designation of the countries as “Formosa – China” and “Peking – China” satisfied the I.O.C., placing the teams under the “F” and “P” sections of the parade to keep them distanced from one another.¹⁴² Brundage responded with a minor change, suggesting that instead of “Peking,” the PRC delegation would be designated as “China – People’s Republic” instead, reasoning

¹³⁹ “MELBOURNE OPENS OLYMPIC VILLAGE: Hungarian Flag Among First Raised – 841 Home Units Set Up for Athletes,” *New York Times*, Oct. 30, 1956.

¹⁴⁰ Telegrams, Jung Kao-tang to Avery Brundage and the Organizing Committee of the XVI Olympiad, 6 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 64, Folder: Tung, Shou-yi, 1956-1959; People’s Republic of China.

¹⁴¹ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 11 July 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

¹⁴² E.J. Holt to Avery Brundage, 16 August 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 165, Folder: XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, E.J. Holt, 1953-56).

that “this would be the proper way and one team would follow the other.”¹⁴³ This seemed satisfactory from the lens of the I.O.C., returning the proposal back to Holt and the rest of the 1956 organizing committee.

However, this decision became a matter of Australian foreign policy, and the I.O.C. was asked to be careful in how to proceed with how to identify each committee. The Taiwanese committee strongly protested the mainland Chinese use of the word “China” to identify themselves, but were later convinced by Australian officials to adopt the term since it was the least damaging solution for all parties involved.¹⁴⁴ In a letter to the I.O.C., Wilfrid Kent Hughes, the chairman of the 1956 Summer Olympics organizing committee, messaged the I.O.C. to let its members know that any decision straying from the decided “Formosa – China” and “Peking – China” would cause “much greater difficulties” leading into the Games. He appeared to be tightlipped when the decision for Taiwan to be referred to as “Formosa” was made, as Hughes noted that, “the future of South East Asia has a tremendous effect on the future of Australia” and any further action would be “dangerous to the extreme, as your existing decision is almost the wisdom of Solomon.”¹⁴⁵

After Holt met with Hughes regarding the designation status of each team, the committee reiterated its position to keep the designations of “Formosa – China” and “Peking – China” at the Games. Brundage would preside over the Executive Board meeting in Lausanne on October 3 and 4 where he regarded the change satisfactory, making it

¹⁴³ Avery Brundage to E.J. Holt, 23 August 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 165, Folder: XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, E.J. Holt, 1953-56).

¹⁴⁴ Wilfrid Kent Hughes to Otto Mayer, n.d., Avery Brundage Collection, Box 120, Folder: Republic of China, Olympic Committee (Taiwan), 1952-1961.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

official that the two countries would be designated as such.¹⁴⁶ Following both the flag raising incident and the decision to designate the mainland Chinese committee as “Peking – China,” the PRC officially withdrew from the 1956 Summer Olympic Games on November 6, 1956, even though the team was standing by in Guangzhou City at that time.¹⁴⁷

Aftermath

The politicization of the entire issue led Brundage to reconsider the recognition of the PRC committee leading up to the 1956 Games in Melbourne. In correspondence with Otto Mayer on November 9, 1956, Brundage posited that, “It would not be a bad idea to withdraw recognition from this Committee, because their efforts since they were recognized have been in political directions almost entirely.”¹⁴⁸ In a rough draft intended to be sent to the Peking delegation, Brundage expressed regret that the committee did not send athletes to participate in the Games, but reproached them in expressing politically-charged views towards both its inclusion and its attempts to exclude the Taiwan delegation from the Games. Brundage held to his assertion that the I.O.C. “recognizes National Olympic Committees – it does not recognize Governments.”¹⁴⁹ Although there is no evidence of this letter being sent to mainland China, the thoughts expressed in this draft

¹⁴⁶ Otto Mayer to E.J. Holt, 7 October 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 165, Folder: XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, E.J. Holt, 1953-56).

¹⁴⁷ Hong and Zhouxiang, 15.

¹⁴⁸ Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer, 9 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

¹⁴⁹ Avery Brundage to the Chinese National Olympic Committee (PRC) (not sent), n.d., Avery Brundage Collection, Box 64, Folder: Tung, Shou-yi, 1956-1959; People’s Republic of China.

are a prime portrayal of the arguments that the I.O.C. would lodge to Dong and the membership of the Peking committee.

Following the PRC committee's exit from the 1956 Games, the situation remained both tense and increasingly political, as Dong protested against the minutes of the Melbourne Session because the name of his country's N.O.C., People's Republic of China, had been written as "Peking China." In addition, his speech at the Melbourne meeting had not been recorded in the minutes. Brundage accepted the first protest but rejected the second, because Tung's comments were purely political in nature and therefore could not be accounted for in the minutes.¹⁵⁰ Dong sent a series of letters to Brundage in 1958 disparaging him and the leadership of the I.O.C. for allowing the Nationalist Chinese delegation to participate under its own flag. He accused Brundage of deliberately violating the Olympic Charter ". . . for the purpose of serving the U.S. imperialists' political scheme of creating 'two Chinas,'" and he stated his intention to refuse to cooperate ". . . with him or have any connection with the I.O.C. while it is under his dominion."¹⁵¹

At the 52nd I.O.C. General Session that was held during the Melbourne Games, Brundage mistakenly referred to the PRC as "Democratic People's Republic of China" and the error was noted in the official meeting minutes. The correction of this mistake began an uncivil letter from Dong, who argued that his nation's dispute with the Taiwanese delegation should not have been labelled by Brundage being "of a political character" and

¹⁵⁰ Yi-Ling Huang and Chen-Huei Wang, "Chinese Question in the Olympic Movement: From the Perspective of Taiwan," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 30, no. 17 (2013): 2054.

¹⁵¹ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 2 September 1958, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 48, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), 1958.

requested the I.O.C. President to delete the remark.¹⁵² In a response that would incite the Peking leadership, Brundage refused to admit that the remarks were apolitical and proceeded to state:

You know, and as a matter of fact, everyone knows that there is a separate Government in Taiwan, which is recognized internationally and specifically by the United Nations . . . We did not create this situation . . . Your Government is not recognized by the United Nations but has been given recognition by the I.O.C. with the understanding that it complies with the Olympic code.¹⁵³

Dong indignantly responded to Brundage a few months after receiving the letter, breaking down his assertions point-by-point in clarifying the “false arguments” that he made, ultimately expressing that Brundage had, “. . . evidently fallen into the political whirl-pool of artificially creating ‘Two Chinese Olympic Committees’ and [had] been very unfriendly to my country and the Chinese Olympic Committee.”¹⁵⁴ Brundage did not take Dong’s remarks well regarding the political nature of the I.O.C., accusing the delegation from Peking to be a “political and not a sport organization,” and kindly told him that, “. . . if you continue to violate both the letter and the spirit of our rules the only remedy will be to request your resignation.”¹⁵⁵

On August 19, 1958, the self-proclaimed All-China Athletic Federation in Peking formally severed relations with the International Olympic Committee due to its recognition of “two Chinas.” The Committee noted that it would be “impossible for the Chinese

¹⁵² Tung Shou-Yi to Avery Brundage, 20 December 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 64, Folder: Tung, Shou-yi, 1956-1959; People’s Republic of China.

¹⁵³ Avery Brundage to Tung Shou-Yi, 8 January 1958, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 64, Folder: Tung, Shou-yi, 1956-1959; People’s Republic of China.

¹⁵⁴ Tung Shou-Yi to Avery Brundage, 23 April 1958, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 64, Folder: Tung, Shou-yi, 1956-1959; People’s Republic of China.

¹⁵⁵ Avery Brundage to Tung Shou-Yi, 1 June 1958, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 64, Folder: Tung, Shou-yi, 1956-1959; People’s Republic of China.

Olympic Committee to consider resuming cooperation with the I.O.C. before the I.O.C. corrects its mistake by withdrawing its recognition of the so-called 'China National Amateur Athletic Federation' in Taiwan and truly live up to its Charter."¹⁵⁶ An Associated Press report quoted Otto Mayer, who said "This action by [Dong Shouyi] was politically motivated by the will of the Chinese leaders, who thus deprived their athletes of the right to participate in the next Olympic Games."¹⁵⁷ The delegation from Peking was thus barred from participating in both the 1960 Summer Olympic Games in Rome and the 1960 Winter Olympic Games in Squaw Valley, California. During the 1960s, there was hardly any contact between the P.R.C. and the IOC or other sporting Organizations, and as a result, Taiwan claimed representation on behalf of all China in international sports.¹⁵⁸ The People's Republic of China would not send another team to the Olympic event until its return to the 1984 Summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

¹⁵⁶ "STATEMENT OF THE CHINESE OLYMPIC COMMITTEE (ALL-CHINA ATHLETIC FEDERATION) ON SEVERING RELATIONS WITH THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE," 19 August 1958, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 64, Folder: Tung, Shou-yi, 1956-1959; People's Republic of China.

¹⁵⁷ Newspaper Clipping, "Red China Barred from 1960 Games," 8 September 1958, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 64, Folder: Tung, Shou-yi, 1956-1959; People's Republic of China.

¹⁵⁸ Chan, 475.

Chapter 4: The Suez Crisis

Opened in 1869 after ten years of work financed by the French and Egyptian governments, European colonial powers instantly recognized the Suez Canal's strategic significance, as it provided the shortest ocean link between the Mediterranean and Indian Oceans. Britain took *de facto* control over Egypt in 1882, including the canal's finances and operations. Following World War II, Britain reassessed its role in the region and realized the economic potential of the Middle East, including the Suez Canal's geo-strategic importance against the background of the Cold War. The Suez Canal Company, which managed the waterway, was legally Egyptian, but in 1869 was granted a 99-year concession, not due to revert to the Egyptian Government until 1968.¹⁵⁹

In October 1951, the Egyptian government unilaterally abrogated the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, the terms of which granted Britain a lease on the Suez base for 20 more years.¹⁶⁰ After the British refused to withdraw from Suez and maintain its colonial power in the country, steady escalation in hostility towards Britain and British troops in Egypt occurred, leading to an incident on January 25, 1952 that resulted in the death of 41 Egyptians in Ismailia. As a result, anti-Western riots in Cairo resulted in heavy damage to property and the deaths of several foreigners, including 11 British citizens, which was signaled as a catalyst for the removal of the Egyptian monarchy.¹⁶¹ On July 23, 1952, a

¹⁵⁹ "Egypt Seizes Suez Canal," *British Broadcasting Corporation* (London), July 26, 1956. http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/july/26/newsid_2701000/2701603.stm.

¹⁶⁰ L.J. Butler, *Britain and Empire: Adjusting to a Post-Imperial World* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 111.

¹⁶¹ John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: The Retreat from Empire in the Post-Cold War World* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), 208.

military coup led by Muhammad Neguib and Gamal Abdul Nasser overthrew King Farouk and established an Egyptian Republic.

This led the British Cabinet to reevaluate the country's influence in the Suez area. Sir Anthony Eden, then-Foreign Secretary of the United Kingdom in 1953, asserted that Britain could no longer hope to maintain its position by the methods of the nineteenth century, "however little we like it."¹⁶² In October 1954, the terms and timetable of the British withdrawal from the Suez base were agreed upon and the United Kingdom would evacuate all its troops from Egyptian territory by the spring of 1956.

To the surprise of the Western powers, President Nasser announced Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal on July 26, 1956, in a speech delivered in the main square of Alexandria. That same day, in actions directed toward Israel, Egypt closed the canal and the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping and blockaded the Gulf of Aqaba.¹⁶³ According to historian A.W. Martin, it was a "well-planned if rather melodramatic coup." When they heard in the speech a pre-arranged code-word ('de Lesseps'), Egyptian officers opened sealed instructions; martial law was proclaimed in the Canal Zone and troops seized the Suez Canal Company's offices and installations.¹⁶⁴ The nationalization surprised Britain and its commonwealth, as the action threatened British economic and military interests in the region.

Great Britain's Prime Minister Sir Anthony Eden and the British Cabinet responded to the act the next day, forming the so-called Egypt Committee. With an uncompromising

¹⁶² Frank Heinlein, *British Government Policy and Decolonisation, 1945-1963: Scrutinizing the Official Mind* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), 92.

¹⁶³ "Egypt Seizes Suez Canal."

¹⁶⁴ A.W. Martin, "R.G. Menzies and the Suez Crisis," *Australian Historical Studies* 23, no. 92 (1989): 163.

attitude toward the nationalization clearly apparent, the minutes from one meeting recorded, “While our ultimate purpose is to place the Canal under international control, our immediate concern is to bring about the downfall of the present Egyptian government.”¹⁶⁵ At this was happening, Israel and France decided if military action was the best way to react to the nationalization of the canal, as Prime Minister Guy Mollet was “outraged” by Nasser’s move. In July 1956, Israel Defense Forces (IDF) chief of staff General Moshe Dayan advised Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion that Israel should attack Egypt at the first chance, but Ben Gurion stated he preferred to attack Egypt with the aid of France.¹⁶⁶ France supported an alliance between the two nations against Egypt, but according to Shimon Peres, then-Director-General of the Israel Ministry of Defense, the U.K. would also need to be convinced that military action would be fruitful, as France’s alliance with Britain would be at risk since the U.K. was opposed to Israel taking action against Nasser.¹⁶⁷

U.K. Prime Minister Anthony Eden submitted to French pressure and decided in October 1956 to include Israel in the Anglo Anglo-French plan for the invasion of the Suez Canal zone to capture the canal, nicknamed “Operation Musketeer.” In a secret meeting that took place at Sèvres, which was located just outside Paris, Britain and France enlisted Israeli support for an alliance against Egypt. The parties drew up a protocol in which Israel undertook to attack Egypt, and Britain and France to invade on the pretext of “separating

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 164.

¹⁶⁶ Donald Neff, *Warriors at Suez* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), 295.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 310; According to American historian Derek Varble, The British alliances with the Hashemite kingdoms of Jordan and Iraq had made the British “very reluctant” to fight alongside Israel, as a potential backlash in the Arab world threaten London’s friends in Amman and Baghdad. For more, see Derek Varble, *The Suez Crisis 1956* (London: Osprey, 2003), 26.

the combatants” and protecting the canal.¹⁶⁸ This meeting was held secret from the public, and the pretense that was fed to the British public was that “Britain and France were intervening to halt the war between Israel and Egypt.”¹⁶⁹ However, once action was initiated on October 29 when Israel launched a series of attacks on the Sinai Peninsula, Western public opinion shifted to dismay and protests appeared upset not only with the military action, but with the way that Eden and his allies had covered the intent to invade.¹⁷⁰

Olympic officials were significantly affected from the onset of the crisis, as two top officials from the Melbourne organizing committee, Wilfrid Kent Hughes and Lieutenant General Sir William Bridgeford, expressed doubt that the Games would even be held because of the troubled situation in the Middle East.¹⁷¹ Avery Brundage remained optimistic that the Games would move forward unimpeded, asking all countries affected by the situation to maintain their commitment to the Olympic Charter and participate with political motivations set aside.

Like the dilemma facing Australia in assigning designations for the Democratic and Nationalist Chinese teams, matters of international diplomacy directly affected the host country. In an Associated Press article dated a few weeks before the opening ceremonies in Melbourne, the piece noted that, “There is speculation that the International Olympic

¹⁶⁸ Ian Black, “Secrets and Lies at the Heart of Britain’s Middle Eastern Folly,” *The Guardian*, July 11, 2006, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2006/jul/11/egypt.past>.

¹⁶⁹ John Fairhall, “Drama sparks Suez Crisis memories,” *Eastern Daily Press*, June 30, 2011, https://web.archive.org/web/20141102190920/http://www.edp24.co.uk/norfolk-life/drama_sparks_suez_crisis_memories_1_949446.

¹⁷⁰ In Britain, *The Guardian*, *Observer*, and *News Chronicle* denounced the “folly and crookedness” of the war. Journalists also note that when the British public discovered the British government’s “murky dishonesty,” it resulted in a “dilemma.” See *Ibid*.

¹⁷¹ Newspaper Clipping, “Olympics Won’t Be Affected By Crisis, Officials Hope,” 11 February 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

Committee will cancel Melbourne's charter to stage the 1956 games if Australia lines up with Britain."¹⁷² Being handed the unforeseen circumstance of the Suez Crisis so close to the beginning of the Games, the Melbourne Organizing Committee weighed every option carefully, constantly communicating with top officials of the I.O.C. and its own government.

Israel

Although Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq did not attend the 1956 Summer Olympic Games in Melbourne because of the Suez Crisis, one country's team was nearly barred from attending due to the aggressive actions its government took as a perpetrator of the incident. As one of the primary belligerents in the Suez Crisis, Israel was nearly barred from the Melbourne Games since its country initiated the military action at the Suez Canal on October 29, 1956. In an Associated Press report on October 30, Sir William Bridgeford, chief executive officer of the Melbourne Games organizing committee, announced that Israel had concerns regarding its team's attendance. He said that, ". . . warring nations are debarred from taking part, and if Israel and Egypt are considered to be at war, Israel will not be allowed to compete."¹⁷³

The response from the I.O.C. was an incredulous rejection of the opinion, as Otto Mayer wrote to Brundage, "What a ridiculous new [statement] Sir Bridgeford gave from Melbourne. Why should Israel not be allowed to compete ? Because they are in war ? This

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Newspaper Clipping, "Hungarian Olympics Leave for Melbourne," 30 October 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

does not concern us.”¹⁷⁴ The I.O.C. affirmed to the media that it would not intervene in the conflict and that it would attempt to prevent any further teams from boycotting due to political reasons.

The situation intensified relations between the I.O.C. leadership and the Melbourne organizing committee, as the friction between each faction in whether to rescind Israel’s invitation to the Melbourne Games came to a head. Authority was blurred in terms of which party had the jurisdiction to decide this situation. Mayer expressed to Brundage that, “I hope the australians are not going to take a decision which does not concern them,” all the while asserting the authority of the I.O.C. by denouncing the lieutenant general’s statement in the press.¹⁷⁵ As Mayer was not in Melbourne at the time of the situation, he was uncertain yet hopeful that Brundage would concur with the opinion not to bar Israel from participating. He believed that internal disagreement within the I.O.C. could, “. . . open a new trouble with Melbourne!!!”¹⁷⁶

Only a few days following the announcement from Sir Bridgeford, Otto Mayer retracted the lieutenant general’s statement and announced that “Israel, or any other country in a state of war, would be permitted to compete at the Melbourne Olympic Games . . . In fact, they will be most welcome.”¹⁷⁷ The Israeli delegation cut its participation from 20 athletes to just three following the announcement of boycotts, but the nation’s presence

¹⁷⁴ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 31 October 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Newspaper Clipping, “Olympics Won’t Be Affected by Crisis, Officials Hope,” 11 February 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

was still felt at the Games.¹⁷⁸ Led by flag bearer Yoav Ra'anana, Israel's three athletes participated diving, swimming, and field events.

Egypt

Long before the Suez Crisis occurred, a key figure of both the Egyptian N.O.C. leadership and the I.O.C. leadership, Muhammad Taher Pasha, was involved in legal troubles that inhibited some responsibilities that were entangled with the decision not to compete at the 1956 Games. Following the Egyptian Revolution of 1952, the new Revolution Command Council (RCC) made sweeping changes across the country's political landscape. Taher, chairman of the Egyptian Olympic Committee and one of the executive members of the I.O.C., was a member of the previous dynasty and had been put in a camp "under control," his fate uncertain.¹⁷⁹ When the RCC abolished the monarchy in favor of a republic on June 18, 1953, Taher had his property seized later that same year.¹⁸⁰ In correspondence between Otto Mayer and Avery Brundage, the men expressed remorse when they found Taher to be imprisoned in December 1953.¹⁸¹ The two had attempted to reach contact with him, but to no avail.¹⁸² Fortunately, his imprisonment did not last long and he was in regular

¹⁷⁸ "Kent Hughes' Plea to Athletes, spectators: 'DON'T SACRIFICE OUR GAMES TO POLITICS.'"

¹⁷⁹ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 24 September 1952, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 46, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Aug. 1, 1952 to June 30, 1953.

¹⁸⁰ Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer, 13 November 1953, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 46, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), July 1, 1953 to June 30, 1954; Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 7 October 1952, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 46, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Aug. 1, 1952 to June 30, 1953.

¹⁸¹ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 23 November 1953, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 46, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), July 1, 1953 to June 30, 1954.

¹⁸² Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer, 28 December 1953, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 46, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), July 1, 1953 to June 30, 1954; Telegram, Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 23 December 1953, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 46, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), July 1, 1953 to June 30, 1954.

communication with Brundage the following month, advising the I.O.C. president on the viability of the Games in Melbourne.¹⁸³

The Courier-Mail in Brisbane originally reported on December 10, 1954 that Egypt would consider a boycott because of a recommendation by the Arab League, which suggested that Egypt should not enter sporting events in which Israel was also taking part.¹⁸⁴ The committee's recommendation was not binding on Arab States, but an Egyptian spokesperson noted that it would be "considered very seriously."¹⁸⁵ While the delegation did not abstain from the Games on these grounds, Egypt's ultimate decision not to attend the Melbourne Summer Olympic Games was alerted to Brundage and the I.O.C. well before the outbreak of the Suez Crisis. A few months before the opening ceremonies were slated to be held in Melbourne, Taher communicated to the I.O.C. brass that his delegation would be absent from the Games "not for political reasons," but due to "a lack of money."¹⁸⁶

On August 13, Brundage expressed that he was upset with Egypt's decision not to send athletes to Melbourne for the Games.¹⁸⁷ He told his I.O.C. Chancellor Otto Mayer in private communications that he doubted the Egyptian delegation's reasoning that its boycott was due to "sports considerations," rather opining that "I think that politics is the

¹⁸³ Mohammed Taher Pasha to Avery Brundage, 11 January 1954, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 62, Folder: Pasha, S. E. Mohammed Taher, 1938, 1950-1970; Egypt.

¹⁸⁴ "Egypt may boycott 1956 Olympics," *The Courier-Mail* (Brisbane, Queensland, Australia), Dec. 10, 1954.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 4 January 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1957.

¹⁸⁷ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 13 August 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

most important item for them. Of course they shall never say it. Therefore we better leave our hands out of it and believe what they say. They will anyway never say the truth.”¹⁸⁸

Communication with Taher was limited throughout the withdrawal process, and the reasoning for the ultimate withdrawal did not arrive at Brundage’s desk for another full month following the announcement. In a letter from the Egyptian chairman to Brundage on September 13, Taher apologetically laid out his country’s situation:

Otto told me about a letter you had written to the Egyptian N.C., about participation at Melbourne. I did not see the text of that letter, but I am sure I agree with you; only that I am certain also, that the real reason, for the non-participation is a financial one . . . I deeply regret not to be at your side there, for a number of reasons, one of them quite similar to that of our N.C.!

Although Taher’s Egyptian delegation would not be present at the 1956 Summer Games, his role as a member of the I.O.C. executive board remained extant, and his belief in preserving the spirit of the Olympic Games contradicted his own committee’s actions, which was to boycott the event. On October 30, 1956, Otto Mayer called for an “Olympic Truce” to help the athletes from the Hungarian delegation to leave war-torn Budapest to make it to Melbourne on time for the beginning of the opening ceremonies, a decision that Taher helped approve.¹⁹⁰ Despite the problems that he and his family were facing

¹⁸⁸ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 18 August 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

¹⁸⁹ Mohammed Taher Pasha to Avery Brundage, 13 September 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 62, Folder: Pasha, S. E. Mohammed Taher, 1938, 1950-1970; Egypt.

¹⁹⁰ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 30 October 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956; During the ancient Olympic Games in Olympia, a proclamation of a “sacred truce” for two to three months before and after the Games was called. The truce never stopped a war, as the organizers were well aware, as they saw wars as endemic during the era. However, what this “Olympic truce” was meant to do, and succeeded in doing, was to prevent wars from disrupting during the Games, above all by insuring safe conduct for all attendees who wished to travel to Olympia and then back home. For more, see Moses I. Finley and Henry Willy Pleket, *The Olympic Games: The First Thousand Years* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1976), 98.

domestically (including a brief imprisonment), paired with the British and French intervention to reclaim the Suez Canal, Taher was seen to be having an impact on disadvantaged athletes and their potential participation in Melbourne.

His attitude towards the athletes representing the countries that were attacking his country, however, were much the opposite. Following the outbreak of the crisis, Taher appealed by cable to Otto Mayer that the entries of France and England should be refused for the Melbourne Games. Mayer ignored Taher's request, noting that his reasoning was political, returning to Taher a sharp rebuttal.¹⁹¹ Adamant in his belief that the offending countries should be barred, Taher refused to admit that political motivations fueled his request. As Mayer later told Wilfrid Kent Hughes, “. . . they seemed surprised and cabled back a long telegramme explaining that this was not political.”¹⁹² Despite the kerfuffle, the I.O.C. did not grant this request, respectfully allowing for the British and French athletes to compete.

In January 1957, one month following the closing ceremonies of the 16th Olympiad in Melbourne, Otto Mayer sent letters to the countries that boycotted the Games for political purposes. Notably, Egypt was absent in Mayer's communication, as he explained to a colleague, “. . . they withdrew long before (beginning of October or even in September) and not for political reasons (they said anyhow).”¹⁹³

¹⁹¹ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 4 January 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1957.

¹⁹² Otto Mayer to W.S. Kent Hughes, 18 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1956-59).

¹⁹³ Otto Mayer to Lt. Col. C.E.C. Hope, 5 January 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1957.

The Australian government may have also indirectly played a role in Egypt's ultimate exclusion. As a commonwealth nation, Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies supported Britain in the early weeks following the Egyptian seizure of the Suez Canal, calling the dispute over the canal, "a crisis more grave than any since the Second World War ended."¹⁹⁴ In September, Menzies led an international committee in negotiations with Nasser, which sought to achieve international management of the Canal. The talks did not end in favor of the Western diplomatic powers, with Menzies later telling reporters in London that, "Egypt will have nothing to do with any peaceful solution of the Canal problem which does not leave Egypt sole master of the Canal."¹⁹⁵

As the head of the Egyptian N.O.C., Muhammed Taher Pasha had no relationship with the new Egyptian head of state, having been arrested by his council upon the completion of the revolution in 1952. Otto Mayer recognized this disassociation when Taher attempted to intervene in the barring of the English and French teams, ignoring his final appeal and reasoning to Kent Hughes, "I did not reply as the poor Egyptian Olympic Committee is under the hands of that man called Nasser too well known by Mr. Menzies !!"¹⁹⁶ Those "guilty of cowardly aggression" were demanded to be expelled from the Olympic Games, but there was no possibility that the IOC would bar the British and French

¹⁹⁴ James George Eayrs, *The Commonwealth and Suez: A Documentary Survey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), 56; In a speech to the Australian House of Representatives on November 1, Menzies, regarding whether the propriety of action taken by the Great Britain and France was justified, stated the Government of Australia believed that the action was proper, rationalizing the action as a "police action taken in a state of great emergency" given that "the Canal would have been involved in war long before any United Nations' action would become effective." For more, see *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁹⁵ R. Rhodes James, *Anthony Eden* (London: Papermac, 1986), 446-452, found in Martin, 172.

¹⁹⁶ Otto Mayer to W.S. Kent Hughes, 18 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1956-59).

from competing in Melbourne.¹⁹⁷ Interference in the way of frustrating the commonwealth countries would only ensure further fracas between Australia and the Egyptian N.O.C. and possibly upset relations between the new Egyptian government and the committee itself.

Lebanon and Iraq

The National Olympic Committees of Lebanon and Iraq each boycotted the 1956 Summer Olympic Games just before the opening ceremonies. Like Egypt, however, each of their preliminary reasons for not attending the Games were non-political in nature and were completely unrelated to the military action taken in the Suez Canal. In fact, each of these countries withdrew before the events in Egypt took place. In the end, however, Brundage reported at the 52nd General Session in Melbourne that political developments in Egypt had caused the teams from Lebanon and Iraq to withdraw, due to the British, French, and Israeli actions in the country.¹⁹⁸

The Olympic team representing Lebanon had previously enjoyed one of its most successful Olympic performances in its history, sending nine competitors in four sports and earning one silver and one bronze medal in men's Greco-Roman wrestling.¹⁹⁹ Hoping to ride off that momentum, the country looked forward to competing in Melbourne. Lebanon's entry into the Melbourne Olympic Games came in December 1955, announced

¹⁹⁷ Allen Guttmann, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games* (Champaign, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 99.

¹⁹⁸ Minutes of the 52nd General Session of the IOC, Melbourne, Australia, 19-21 November and 4 December, 1956, 5-6, IOCL.

¹⁹⁹ From 1948 to 2016, the country of Lebanon has only earned four medals in the Summer Olympic Games: two silver and two bronze. At the 1952 Summer Olympic Games in Helsinki, Zakaria Chihab earned the silver in the men's Greco-Roman bantamweight division, while Khalil Taha won bronze in the men's Greco-Roman welterweight division.

at the same time as the Republic of China.²⁰⁰ Lebanon planned on sending ten athletes to take part in the wrestling, rowing, weight-lifting, and shooting competitions.

Gabriel Gemayel, the president of the Lebanese Olympic Committee and I.O.C. member, formally withdrew his team from participating at the Melbourne Olympic Games on October 25, 1956, a full four days before the Suez Crisis occurred. In his letter to the I.O.C., Gemayel explained that the Lebanese Government had entrusted him the honor of being the President of the upcoming Arab Games to be held in Beirut in October 1957, and it would have been very difficult for him to attend based on the circumstances.²⁰¹ In addition, he expressed doubt about transportation from Beirut to Melbourne, as the plane routes between the two cities carried uncertain departure times.

Carrying an apologetic tone through the bulk of his message explaining his country's withdrawal and detailing the second edition of the Arab Games to be hosted in Lebanon, Gemayel assured Brundage that his duties to the I.O.C. would not be diminished due to his commitment in hosting the Arab Games. He told Brundage that he ensured that the dates of the Games did not overlap with the next I.O.C. General Session slated to be held in September 1957.²⁰²

On November 14, 1956, Otto Mayer confirmed to the Melbourne Olympic organizing committee that Lebanon would not reconsider its decision to boycott the

²⁰⁰ News Release, Organizing Committee of the XVI Olympiad, December 1955, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (News Releases, Australian News and Information Bureau).

²⁰¹ Gabriel Gemayel to Avery Brundage, 25 October 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 57, Folder: Gemayel, Cheik Gabriel, 1956-70, 1973; Lebanon.

²⁰² Ibid.

Games.²⁰³ In his status report regarding the boycotted countries as of November 18, Mayer told Brundage that Gemayel “did his best, but, he added the actual situation in Middle-Orient was such, that it is impossible to send a delegation now.”²⁰⁴ He was not specific as to why the situation was “impossible,” whether it be political or because of complications in transportation.

On November 12, however, the Australian Associated Press reported that Gemayel cabled the Egyptian Olympic committee announcing its decision to boycott as a “mark of solidarity” with Egypt.²⁰⁵ On November 21, Lebanon formally amended its reasoning for attending the Games, notifying the I.O.C. that “We second Egyptian Olympic Committee’s proposal preventing participation Melbourne Games ‘agressors Egypte’ [sic] following olympic principles.”²⁰⁶ Perhaps seconding Egypt’s proposal to request the boycott of the French and English teams at the Games, Lebanon came out in support of its Middle Eastern neighbor and introduced a political motive in its abstention from participation in Melbourne. This action retracted its prior reasoning from before the Suez Crisis, which was because of Gemayel’s obligations to the Arab Games. The reason for this adjustment in reasoning is unclear, but it now labeled Lebanon as a country that was boycotting the Games for political reasons, breaching Rule 1 of the Olympic Charter.

²⁰³ Telegram, Otto Mayer to XVI Olympiad Organizing Committee, 14 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

²⁰⁴ Otto Mayer to W.S. Kent Hughes, 18 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1956-59).

²⁰⁵ Australian Associated Press, “LEBANON TO BOYCOTT OLMYPICS,” *The Canberra Times* (Canberra, Australia), Nov. 12, 1956.

²⁰⁶ Otto Mayer to William Bridgeford, 21 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1956-59).

Despite this revelation following the aftermath of the 16th Olympiad in Melbourne, Brundage did not show any exasperation regarding Lebanon's withdrawal and simply stated his disappointment in not seeing a Lebanese team present. He added that the Games were “. . . a tremendous success – all the more noteworthy because of the disturbed conditions in other parts of the world,” not mentioning anything about the Suez Crisis or events in the Middle East.²⁰⁷ In reply, Gemayel expressed regret over not sending a delegation to Melbourne, but stated his pleasure in gathering I.O.C. members to attend the upcoming Arab Games.²⁰⁸

The Kingdom of Iraq formed its N.O.C. in 1948 and made its first public appearance that year at the Summer Olympic Games in London, sending 12 athletes to participate in two sports, athletics and basketball. There is limited information regarding the Iraq abstention, and there is no correspondence between Brundage, Mayer, or other top I.O.C. officials with any Olympic representatives from the Kingdom of Iraq regarding the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games, including the president of the Iraq N.O.C., Akram Fahmi, who assumed office in 1956. Brundage mentions planning to stop in Baghdad following his trip to Iran for “Olympic Week” from May 12 to 18, 1956, but it is unclear if he ultimately made the visit.

Although scholars have frequently grouped Iraq with Lebanon and Egypt as countries who abstained due to the Suez Crisis, the *Official Report of the Organizing Committee for the Games of the XVI Olympiad* suggests that it did not boycott, but rather

²⁰⁷ Avery Brundage to Gabriel Gemayel, 21 January 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 57, Folder: Gemayel, Cheik Gabriel, 1956-70, 1973; Lebanon.

²⁰⁸ Gabriel Gemayel to Avery Brundage, 29 January 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 57, Folder: Gemayel, Cheik Gabriel, 1956-70, 1973; Lebanon.

it did not have the means of attending. When listing the countries that abstained, the report preceded these countries by stating, “World affairs, did, of course, inevitably leave their mark on the Games. Melbourne was very grateful to the Chancellor of the International Olympic Committee, Mr. Otto Mayer in Lausanne, for his strenuous and successful efforts to abate the storm of withdrawals from Europe.”²⁰⁹ Iraq is not listed among these countries, but is mentioned in the next paragraph, which begins: “Others, who found it impossible to fulfil their earlier optimistic hopes. . .”²¹⁰ Lebanon is also listed in this grouping, but concrete evidence in the opening paragraphs of this section have determined that Lebanon did not participate due to the violence at Suez.

The observed evidence, however, strongly suggests that Iraq was linked to the boycott along with Lebanon and “perhaps” Syria, although there is no evidence of the latter abstaining due to the crisis.²¹¹ Originally accepting its invitation to participate in Melbourne, Iraq looked primed to make its first appearance back to the Games in eight years. Following the announcement of Egypt’s boycott from the Melbourne Games, however, Monnin & David suggest that the withdrawals of Lebanon and Iraq were linked to Pan-Arabism, which asserts that the Arabs constitute a single nation.²¹² In the case of Lebanon, this is plausible due to Gemayel’s commitment to solidarity with its Egyptian neighbors, and Iraq’s association with the Arab world further explains this. Iraq made its

²⁰⁹ Organizing Committee of the XVI Olympiad, *The Official Report of the Organizing Committee for the Games of the XVI Olympiad: Melbourne 1956* (Melbourne: W.M. Houston, 1958), 23.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

²¹¹ Monnin and David, 39.

²¹² *Ibid.*

return to the Rome Summer Olympic Games in 1960 when weightlifter Abdul Wahid Aziz took home the country's first Olympic medal, a bronze in the men's lightweight.

Chapter 5: The Hungarian Revolution

The sphere of Soviet influence and its impact in the Hungarian Revolution would set the stage for the boycott movements that occurred during the 1956 Melbourne Summer Olympic Games, so some background on the political situation in Hungary will be provided. Hungary found itself the last satellite of the Third Reich, occupied by the German army since March 1944, and exposed to the main thrust of Soviet Union forces advancing on central Europe.²¹³ Starting in December 1944, the city of Budapest came under siege during a 50-day-long encirclement by Soviet forces near the end of World War II, making it the longest siege of the war. Hungarian and German troops defended the city, but unconditionally surrendered on February 13, 1945, allowing Allied troops to continue their push towards Berlin. The Soviet Army routed the German army and its remaining allies from Hungarian territory on April 4, 1945, and established a “Four-Power Allied Control Commission” shortly after to oversee postwar political developments.²¹⁴ Soviet governmental presence through this Control Commission was accepted by the Western Allies at their meeting in Yalta, and the influx of exiled Hungarian Communist organizers back to the country allowed the Soviet army to assemble a “broadly based provisional assembly and government” that were the first to launch their political activity following the end of the war.²¹⁵

²¹³ George Schöpflin, “Hungary after the Second World War,” in *The Hungarian Revolution of 1956: Reform, Revolt and Repression 1953-1963*, ed. György Litván (New York: Longman Publishing, 1996), 1.

²¹⁴ Andrew Felkay, *Hungary and the U.S.S.R., 1956-1988* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 17.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*; George Schöpflin notes that the communists started their operations in the wake of the Red Army, sometimes arriving “within hours” of the end of fighting. For more, see Schöpflin, 5.

The 1945-49 period had been one of major social and economic upheaval for Hungary, as the old elite was shattered by its wartime defeat and the newfound controlling communist party introduced a three-years' plan of "reconstruction," which started by nationalized major banks in 1947 and expanded to nationalizing all enterprises employing more than 100 workers in 1948.²¹⁶ On 18 August 1949, the parliament passed the Hungarian Constitution of 1949, which was modeled after the 1936 constitution of the Soviet Union.

Following the ratification of the new constitution, the country fell under the severely authoritarian leadership of Mátyás Rákosi, a chief secretary of the Hungarian Working People's Party who possessed practically unlimited power and demanded complete obedience from fellow members of the Party. A key factor in the country's push to communism in 1949, he was an ardent Stalinist who was once referred to as "the most malevolent character I ever met in political life" by American journalist John Gunther.²¹⁷ Rákosi established a "cult of personality" in which Soviet Union leader Joseph Stalin was the centerpiece, demonstrating that only the communist party constituted politics and that "all else was illegitimate and antagonistic to the Wave of the Future, the historical inevitability of the class struggle."²¹⁸ Approximately 350,000 middle and lower level party officials and intellectuals were purged under his command, which was meant to show that "if the powerful officials of the communist dictatorship can vanish from one day to another, how much more defenceless a simple citizen must be!"²¹⁹ Finally, forced industrialization

²¹⁶ Ibid., 14.

²¹⁷ John Gunther, *Inside Europe Today* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1961), 336.

²¹⁸ Schöpflin, 19.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 19.

was introduced out of Stalinist feelings of “war hysteria,” which was introduced in the country’s First Five Year Plan (1950-1954) that planned to raise industrial output by 204 percent, a figure which was raised to an unbelievable 380 percent in 1951. As a result, real wages plummeted by 18 percent between 1949 and 1952.

Hungarian society was approaching a breaking point in this period of Stalinization. Despite communist leadership attempting to influence Hungarian politics and society, the progressive citizenry of post-war Hungary did not match ideologically with the increasing Soviet influence in the new government. According to Hungarian politician George Schöpflin, Hungary emerged from the war by showing itself to be, “a complex, modernizing society, with clear aspirations for autonomy for individual and group action,” contrary to the political values espoused by the Soviets.²²⁰ The combination of political repression, economic decline and the death of Joseph Stalin on March 5, 1953, ushered in a period of moderate liberalization that helped developed a reform wing in the communist realm of Hungary, with “Stalin’s Best Hungarian Disciple,” Imre Nagy, taking over Rákosi’s post as Prime Minister of the country on July 4, 1953.²²¹ He relaxed state control over the economy and mass media, while encouraging public discussion on political and economic reform and closed forced-labor camps, moves that provoked a counterattack by the Central Committee of the Hungarian Working People’s Party. Condemned for his “rightist deviation,” Nagy was dismissed on April 18, 1955, and Rákosi reassumed his post as the leader of Hungary.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

²²¹ János M. Rainer, “Stalin and Rákosi, Stalin and Hungary, 1949–1953” (workshop, European Archival Evidence: Stalin and the Cold War in Europe, Budapest, October 4, 1997).

Rákosi was again deposed on July 13, 1956, as his “leftist sectarian mistakes” were condemned by top Communist Party officials, including Nikita Khrushchev, whose “Secret Speech” in February 1956 denounced the policies of Joseph Stalin and his followers, which included Rákosi, in Eastern Europe.²²² Ernő Gerő replaced Rákosi on July 18, 1956, but was as detested as Rákosi was. The former second-in-command to Rákosi, Gerő possessed an “. . . ever more insecure and nervous power structure . . . faced with an ever more popular opposition – in its own ranks and beyond.”²²³ His role as the General Secretary of the Hungarian Working People’s Party would be brief, as civilian tensions were primed to detonate in the first few months of his transition to power.

On October 23, 1956, Soviet military units stationed in Hungary were called upon by Hungary’s communist leaders to help put down a revolution that had broken out in Budapest. The revolt began as a student demonstration, which attracted thousands as they marched through the central part of the city. A student delegation, entering the radio building to try to broadcast the students’ demands, was detained. When the demonstrators demanded the delegation’s release, they were fired upon by the State Protection Authority from within the building, resulting in the death of one student who was wrapped in a flag and held above the crowd, marking the start of the revolution. As the news of the revolt spread, disorder and violence erupted throughout the capital and the rest of the country,

Following this action, the Western world caught wind immediately, provoking cries of horror and outrage. The Netherlands, Spanish and Swiss National Olympic Committees

²²² Felkay, 55.

²²³ Schöpflin, 50.

had withdrawn their teams as a protest against USSR actions in Hungary. “How,” asked the president of the Dutch National Olympic Committee, “can sports prevail over what has happened in Hungary?”²²⁴ The I.O.C. condemned the situation occurring in the country, but maintained a laissez-faire attitude toward restricting participation based on political events. In a news release on November 9, the organization stated:

“Every civilised person recoils in horror at the savage slaughter in Hungary, but that is no reason for destroying the nucleus of international co-operation and goodwill we have in the Olympic Movement. The Olympic Games are contests between individuals and not between nations.

We hope that those who have withdrawn from the Melbourne Games will reconsider. In an imperfect world, if participation in sport is to be stopped every time the politicians violate the laws of humanity, there will never be any international contests. Is it not better [*sic*] to try to expand the sportsmanship of the athletic field into other areas?”²²⁵

Brundage asserted that the violence in Hungary should not affect national committee’s decisions to attend the Melbourne Games, releasing the following statement, “Every civilized person recoils in horror at the savage slaughter in Hungary, but that is no reason for destroying the nucleus of international co-operation and good will we have in the Olympic Movement. The Olympic Games are contests between individuals and not between nations.”²²⁶

An array of telegrams from Hungarians across the globe began pouring into Brundage’s residence in Melbourne before the start of the Olympic Games urging him to

²²⁴ Allen Guttman, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games*, 100.

²²⁵ News Release, IOC, 9 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 249, Folder: Games of the 16th Olympiad – Melbourne, 1956 – A.B. Speeches.

²²⁶ Minutes of the 52nd General Session of the IOC, Melbourne, Australia, 19-21 November and 4 December 1956, 4, IOCL.

consider the removal of the U.S.S.R. from the competitions.²²⁷ One citizen in London mentioned in a telegram, “According your official publication on Modern Olympic Games 1950 page 6 paragraph 2 ‘While Olympic Games were taking place wars were stopped roads were free and no one would have dared to break the truce of Olympia.’”²²⁸ Accusations of breaking the Olympic Truce were common across the telegrams, and the “slaughtering of men women and children in Hungary” was justified in barring the Russians although there was no formal declaration of war, which the Olympic Charter said would justify such a sanction. Proponents of the Soviet sanction pointed to the recent examples of Japan and Germany, who were each barred from participating in the 1948 Summer Olympic Games in London due to the nations’ roles in World War II. Eager not to involve the organization within the politics of warring nations, Brundage’s philosophy of neutrality in the face of politics remained in this situation, encouraging delegations to participate and deciding not to exclude the U.S.S.R. or any other perpetrators of worldwide violence at the time. The U.S.S.R. would be the top medal winner in the 1956 Summer Olympic Games, bringing home 98 total medals, 37 of which were gold.

Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, was in Melbourne for the Games to declare the Games open and his royal presence was intended to lend pageantry to the spectacle. However, his political beliefs regarding Soviet participation were front and center, mirroring the sentiments of the Hungarian protestors by sending a sarcastic letter to the

²²⁷ Collection of Telegrams and Letters, November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 132, Folder: Hungary: Hungarian Problem 1956-60; Federation of Hungarian Jurists in America to IOC, 21 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 162, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad – Melbourne, Australia, 1956-General (1956-1960).

²²⁸ Collection of Telegrams and Letters, November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 132, Folder: Hungary: Hungarian Problem 1956-60.

I.O.C., the United States National Olympic Committee, the British press, and the Soviet Ambassador to the United Kingdom, who he denotes as the “Ambassador to Barbarian Swine.”²²⁹ He argued that Soviet participation at the Olympic Games would belittle the revolution in Hungary, concluding his letter by stating, “It is a mockery and an insult to the dead and dying in Hungary and a travesty of the Olympic Spirit.”²³⁰ The passive-aggressive tone throughout the letter attempted to reduce the Games to a charade in light of the events in Hungary, but Brundage signified no interest in the confrontation coming from the Duke.²³¹

According to Ivan & Iván, the period between 1956 and 1963 was categorized as a period of “silence” for Hungarian historians, statisticians, researchers, and journalists following the dramatic events of the fall of 1956.²³² Stories on athletes, events, sport competitions, and even sport statistics completely disregarded the 1956 Games and their results. They argue that the Games hosted a Hungarian team that finished fourth in the medal count, the years that followed the events were “totally ignored” by Hungarian sport historians – in line with the political discourse that was prevalent in Communist Hungary at the time.²³³ This stellar performance was regrettably ignored, but fans of the team at the

²²⁹ The Duke of Edinburgh to P.T. Wenman, 12 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 162, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad – Melbourne, Australia, 1956-General (1956-1960).

²³⁰ Ibid.; Included in the letter is the disparagement of the United States’ reluctance to militarily involve themselves in the uprising, passive-aggressively writing in the margin, “Don’t worry about the USA team arriving late! You havn’t arrived at all for the “Games” in Hungary!”

²³¹ Avery Brundage to Mr. W.T.J. Uren, 7 August 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 162, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad – Melbourne, Australia, 1956-General (1956-1960); In August 1956, Brundage wrote to W.T.J. Uren of the Amateur Sports Club in Melbourne, “The furor in Australia about the appearance of H.R.H., the Duke of Edinburgh, is certainly a mystery to me. No one, let alone myself, has ever had the slightest intention or desire to interfere with the movements of the Duke of Edinburgh in any way, shape or form.”

²³² Ivan with Iván, 16.

²³³ Ibid., 19.

time were unsure if the Hungarian delegation would even decide to attend the Games in Melbourne. With uncertainty hanging in the air, Hungary would need significant help from its neighbors and sporting allies to assure that political events would not hinder its chances at competing.

Hungary

In the early 20th century, Hungary possessed an accomplished history in the realm of sport, winning numerous titles in swimming, boxing, wrestling and gymnastics. The Second World War would seriously hamper the sporting infrastructure of Hungary, sport historian Toby C. Rider explains, but sport was “. . . still, nonetheless, an important part of the national culture and a passion of the people.”²³⁴ Following a successful third place finish at the 1952 Summer Olympic Games in Helsinki in which they won 16 gold medals, political tensions were already present between the Hungarian delegation and the U.S.S.R., which had governmental control over the country. An Associated Press report dated August 6, 1952, reported that nine members of the Hungarian delegation had refused to return to the U.S.S.R.-controlled Hungary in an act of defiance.²³⁵ Although the I.O.C.’s stance of politics having no place in sport was certainly in effect, this act occurred outside of the sporting confines and would prove to be a precursor of the attitudes that both Hungarian

²³⁴ Toby Rider, “The Cold War Activities of the Hungarian National Sports Federation,” in *The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare: Cold War Organizations Sponsored by the National Committee for a Free Europe/Free Europe Committee*, ed. Katalin Kadar Lynn (St. Helena, CA: Helena History Press, 2013): 519.

²³⁵ Newspaper Clipping, “9 HUNGARIANS AT OLYMPICS DEFY REDS AND STAY,” 6 August 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 132, Folder: Hungary, Comité Olympique Hongrois (1940, 1947 & 1956).

citizens and athletes would hold against the Soviets heading into the 1956 Summer Olympic Games in Melbourne.

On December 1955, long before the outbreak of the revolution, Hungarian Olympic officials notified the I.O.C. that the number of athletes competing in Melbourne would reach around 150, which was 39 fewer than the delegation sent in 1952 to Helsinki.²³⁶ Regardless of the drop in attendance, this number was impressive both because of the distance needed to travel to Melbourne from Hungary and because it was among the highest number of participants for the countries planning to be represented at Melbourne, contributing to a “record entry” of the number of participants for the upcoming Games.

On October 22, 1956, the students of the Budapest University of Technology and Economics had resurrected the banned MEFESZ student union and had staged a demonstration at the Hungarian capital the following day, October 23; this set off a chain of events leading directly to the revolution and signaled the beginning of the uprising. Immediately unaware of these events, a news release from the I.O.C. on October 24 announced that it had received representatives from the Hungarian delegation, expecting the full team’s arrival on November 3.²³⁷ After receiving news of the events in Budapest, the organizing body later announced on October 31 that the team would still be attending

²³⁶ News Release, Organizing Committee of the XVI Olympiad, December 1955, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (News Releases, Australian News and Information Bureau).

²³⁷ News Release, Organizing Committee of the XVI Olympiad, 24 October 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (News Releases, Australian News and Information Bureau); News Release, Organizing Committee of the XVI Olympiad, 31 October 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (News Releases, Australian News and Information Bureau).

the Olympic Games, but would be delayed one week due to “unforeseen circumstances,” with 151 athletes expected to arrive on November 10.

The I.O.C. appealed to Hungary through the Swiss Legation in Budapest on October 28 to request the immediate departure of the team, which had been approved and authorized the outgoing flight soon after it was requested. In his letter to Max Petitpierre, the head of the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Otto Mayer acknowledged that the I.O.C. was unaware of the well-being of the athletes upon the breakout of the war, with the latest information being that the team had gathered on the Isle of Tata on the Danube River to train.²³⁸ He told Petitpierre, “We do not know what the fate of the Hungarian delegation is, but let us suppose that it is difficult, if not impossible, to foresee its departure for Australia, unless our intervention can make things easier.”²³⁹

Two days later, following the approval of the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an Associated Press article reported that the 150 members of the Hungarian team were permitted to leave for Melbourne with “safe conduct” from both sides involved in the civil war.²⁴⁰ The Hungarian Minister of Sports gave the team permission to leave Budapest by train via Prague, and from there they would fly out to Melbourne.

An unsung hero throughout the process was the Olympic committee of Czechoslovakia, which assured the I.O.C. every step of the way that the Hungarian team

²³⁸ Otto Mayer to W.S. Kent Hughes, 18 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1956-59); The information of the Hungarian delegation’s whereabouts was confirmed by Brundage from a private source. The Isle of Tata is situated about 60 kilometers from the Hungarian capital of Budapest.

²³⁹ Otto Mayer to Monsieur le Conseiller Fédéral, 28 October 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

²⁴⁰ Newspaper Clipping, “Hungarian Olympians Leave for Melbourne,” 30 October 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

had both safely arrived in Prague and flown out to Melbourne. Mayer applauded the effort of good-will amidst the struggle of the Hungarian people, telling Brundage that the good faith, “. . . shows once more that Universal Sports’ help is not said in vain and that Olympic spirit is above all political movements.”²⁴¹

Although the process of delivering the athletes to Australia was nearly flawless, one major obstacle stood in the way of Brundage and the I.O.C. Hungarian I.O.C. member Ferenc Mezö, who was already situated in Melbourne, had called Otto Mayer in Switzerland to say that his delegation had waited five days in Nymburk, a city east of Prague, without having any planes to leave for Melbourne. Feeling “very anxious and nervous,” Mezö had asked for further I.O.C. intervention in obtaining a plane to transport the Hungarian delegation.²⁴² A major fear arising from the delegation was that if they could not obtain a plane and depart for Melbourne, the question of whether they could remain safe in Prague was in doubt, fearing a potential return to an active war situation in Hungary. Mayer expressed doubt, noting that money for the planes was “missing” and could not guarantee that it would arrive in time for the Hungarian athletes.²⁴³ Fortunately, Mayer secured two French planes thanks to a colleague who worked at *L’Equipe* magazine in Paris, averting a crisis and helping the delegation get to Melbourne in time for the opening ceremonies.

²⁴¹ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 2 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

²⁴² Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 4 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

²⁴³ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 5 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

The action represented the first modern “Olympic Truce” in history, which was first enacted during the Ancient Olympic Games in Greece that declared in order, “. . . to permit contestants, officials and visitors to travel to the Games in peace from all parts of the world and suggested that the IOC proclaim peace in the world during the Modern Games.”²⁴⁴ A “great victory for the Olympic Movement” occurred when the Hungarian team secured flights safely from war-torn Hungary to the other side of the world in Melbourne.

The success of delivering the Hungarian athletes to Melbourne was received with mixed views, both in the name of Olympism and within the political realm. After acting to appeal to the Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mayer self-reflected on the action by telling Brundage, “I thought it was our duty to help the Hungarians to join Melbourne and it would be a great success for the IOC. and for sport in general if we could succeed. That would prove how strong is our Movement against politics.”²⁴⁵

The action, however, was viewed by some through a political lens and created minor controversy in some circles. Mayer let Brundage know that he had been criticized for aiding in the transportation of the Hungarian athletes because of their political views. He expressed, “You have no idea how I have been attacked because I saved life in bringing out of Hungary 150 athletes (I did not control if they were communists or patriots, for me they were athletes).”²⁴⁶ Despite Mayer’s innocuous reasoning, the act was one of many that

²⁴⁴ Minutes of the 52nd General Session of the IOC, Melbourne, Australia, 19-21 November and 4 December 1956, 13-14, IOCL.

²⁴⁵ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 28 October 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

²⁴⁶ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 11 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

led his disparagers to call for his resignation following the Melbourne Games, which will be discussed in a later section.

Like the error involving mainland China and Taiwan, a controversy was provoked by the presence of national flags in the Olympic Village. Olympic officials originally raised the communist-Hungarian flag, which was the official flag before the uprising in Budapest began. Having ignored complaints from Hungarian athletes and fans to replace the flag, a group of “angry Hungarian migrants” ripped down the flag and hoisted the free Hungarian flag in its place, shouting “Down with the Communist flag . . . Long live Free Hungary” as they ripped the Communist emblem from the middle of the flag.²⁴⁷ The group later apologized for their actions, saying “We are sorry we did that – it was just our hot Hungarian blood.”²⁴⁸ The commandant of the camp at the Village, Philip Miskin, said that the flag, tattered where the Hungarians had ripped the Red emblem away, would be replaced by a Free Hungarian flag, which was quickly being adopted by Hungarians both in Hungary and abroad as a symbol of defiance toward the Russians that had invaded the country.

Hungarian nationalism, as the flag incident proved, was at a high point during the Olympic Games and it had a significant effect on the athletes competing. For some athletes, however, this patriotic fervor did not become apparent until they arrived in Melbourne. Before the outbreak of the violence in Hungary, a small group of athletes traveled to

²⁴⁷ “Unscheduled Flag ‘Ceremony’ At Olympic Village,” *The Canberra Times* (Canberra, Australia), Nov. 13, 1956; Hungarian revolutionaries, in an act of defiance, tore out the communist symbols from the middle of flags during the uprising in 1956. Some replaced this “Hole in the Flag” with the Kossuth Arms, which symbolized Hungarian democratic aspirations as seen originally in the Hungarian Revolution of 1848.

²⁴⁸ “Unscheduled Flag ‘Ceremony’ At Olympic Village.”

Australia by ship in the company of Soviet athletes, of whom the Hungarians did not bat an eye. According to Senn, the Hungarians heard nothing of the trouble at home until Hungarian émigrés greeted them at the dock in Melbourne with stories of repression and violence.²⁴⁹

Nationalism may have attributed to the team's overall performance, as the Hungarian athletes represented one of the top performing teams in Melbourne, earning 26 total medals, including nine gold medals, in 12 sports. The delegation's overall performance was defined by the infamous "Blood in the Water" water polo match against the U.S.S.R. on December 6, in which the Hungarian side defeated the Soviets 4-0. The Soviet tanks that invaded the Hungarian capital of Budapest highlighted the political significance of the match, and throughout the match there was "kicking and punching from both sides," with Hungarian star Ervin Zador climbing out of the pool in the final minutes with blood streaming from his eye and into the pool.²⁵⁰ The Hungarian team advanced to the gold medal match, defeating Yugoslavia 2-1 to win its fourth Olympic gold medal in the event.

Of the following countries that boycotted the Melbourne Games due to the violence caused by the Hungarian Revolution, Brundage noted that, ". . . those which withdrew as a result of the happenings in Hungary must feel very foolish indeed with the Hungarian team itself participating."²⁵¹ Despite earning the fourth-most gold medals at the Melbourne

²⁴⁹ Senn, 108.

²⁵⁰ Kirsty Reid, "Blood in the water: Hungary's 1956 water polo gold," *BBC*, Aug. 20, 2011, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-14575260>.

²⁵¹ Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer, 26 December 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

Games, Brundage believed that the Hungarians' standard of performance, "certainly suffered from their frame of mind."²⁵²

Despite having communications with Mayer in Czechoslovakia regarding the issue with the Melbourne-bound planes, there is no recorded communication between Mezö and Brundage between September 1956 and January 1957. Mezö returned to Hungary following the Olympic Games. The uprising in the country had ended on November 10, before the start of the competitions, but he had returned just before Christmas before the new Soviet-installed government had assumed its place the following January. He told Brundage that, "except the broken windows and two hits in my flat – I found everything all right."²⁵³

Spain

Captain General José Moscardó Ituarte, a high-ranking member of the Francoist army that took control following the Spanish Civil War in 1939, was named the president of the Comité Olímpico Español (Spanish Olympic Committee; C.O.E.) in 1941. He held the position for 15 years before his death in April 1956, just seven months before the Melbourne Summer Olympic Games. The change in leadership deeply affected the structure of the C.O.E., as new members to the committee had been appointed from different Olympic sport federations and had come in with "long and clean amateur

²⁵² Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer, 7 January 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1957.

²⁵³ Ferenc Mezö to Avery Brundage, 2 February 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 60, Folder: Mezo, Dr. Ferenc, 1948-1963; Hungary.

sportsmanship records.”²⁵⁴ The new-look committee was led by José Antonio Elola-Olaso, a well-known lawyer in Spain who possessed an established record of organizing sporting events and camps.

The Spanish team had a subpar performance at the 1952 Summer Olympic Games in Helsinki, sending 27 men to compete in seven sports. The lone medalist, shooter Ángel León, took the silver in the men’s free pistol. Looking to perhaps scale back on the number of athletes to send, Elola-Olaso led his first meeting of the C.O.E. on October 4. Spanish attendance in Melbourne was to be more modest than the previous Games, with only four or five athletes planning to attend due to the limited time available in preparing a team and to “reduced economic means.”²⁵⁵ Representing I.O.C. sentiments, Otto Mayer understood this reasoning, replying, “If your representation to the Melbourne Games will be reduced, the main thing is that your country is taking part in them and that your athletes will sympathize with those of the 73 countries present.”²⁵⁶

The future was bright for the Spanish delegation, but with the change in leadership and restructuring of the entire Committee, a refreshment of both finances and ideology would signal a rebuilding period for the inexperienced group. Carrying an optimistic outlook thanks to the new leadership and to the “great help from the educational circles”

²⁵⁴ Pedro Ybarra Mac-Mahon to Avery Brundage, 15 October 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 60, Folder: MacMahon, Pedro Ibarra (Baron de Guell), 1953-69; Spain.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.; José Antonio Elola-Olaso to Avery Brundage, 25 May 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 148, Folder: Spain, Comité Olimpico Español (1936, 1940, 1946-47, 1952-1962); Pedro Ibarra McMahan, the I.O.C. member representing the C.O.E. at the time, also mentioned that the Committee only wanted to send “...people who really could take part in an honourable way, not hoping perhaps to win any medal whatsoever but, as I tell you, to ‘play the game’ in a serious way.”

²⁵⁶ Otto Mayer to Joaquin Agulla, 25 August 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 148, Folder: Spain, Comité Olimpico Español (1936, 1940, 1946-47, 1952-1962)

in the country, Spain would seek to send between 40 and 50 athletes for the 1960 Summer Olympic Games in Rome, a city much closer to the C.O.E.'s headquarters in Madrid.²⁵⁷

The first signs of fledgling Spanish commitment to attend the Games came shortly after the C.O.E.'s first meeting with its new leadership. Pedro Ibarra McMahan, the I.O.C. member representing the Spanish National Olympic Committee, notified Brundage on October 15, 1956, that it would have been "almost impossible" for him to personally attend the Games in Melbourne, citing his mother's poor health as the reason for his absence.²⁵⁸ Ibarra confirmed with Brundage on November 5 that his mother's health would affect his attendance in Melbourne.²⁵⁹

Rumblings of a Spanish withdrawal were first recognized on November 9, as Otto Mayer sent the C.O.E. a telegram thanking the delegation in reconsidering the decision to withdraw from the Games. The delegation was to meet the following day on November 10 to discuss the status of its abstention. Mayer reminded them to "not consider the regrettable abstention of the Swiss, of which I completely dissociate myself."²⁶⁰ In that session called by Ibarra, the C.O.E. was the last of the boycotting countries to consider a possible withdrawal.²⁶¹ Ibarra claimed he could do "very little," as he considered the negative

²⁵⁷ Pedro Ybarra Mac-Mahan to Avery Brundage, 15 October 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 60, Folder: MacMahon, Pedro Ibarra (Baron de Guell), 1953-69; Spain.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Pedro Ybarra Mac-Mahan to Avery Brundage, 5 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 60, Folder: MacMahon, Pedro Ibarra (Baron de Guell), 1953-69; Spain.

²⁶⁰ Telegram, Otto Mayer to Spanish Olympic Committee, 9 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 162, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad – Melbourne, Australia, 1956-General (1956-1960); The fear here was that Switzerland's withdrawal may create a sort of "domino effect" in which Spain would comply in line with other countries withdrawing over the same conflict. As a native of Switzerland, Mayer did not want to confuse the C.O.E. that the I.O.C. shared the same abstention views as Switzerland.

²⁶¹ Telegram, Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 9 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

sentiment from Spanish officials and citizens regarding the violence in Hungary towards his delegation's ultimate participation.²⁶² Following the discussions, a telegram from the C.O.E. delivered to I.O.C. headquarters in Lausanne confirmed the withdrawal, notifying the brass of a unanimous vote from the Spanish delegation of its withdrawal due to Spanish sensitivity towards the "pain" of Hungarians.²⁶³

The antagonistic view of Spanish citizens toward the uprising was justified, as Spain was the only country in Europe to send military assistance to Hungary during the crisis.²⁶⁴ President Francisco Franco, contacted by Otto von Habsburg, was eager to seize the opportunity to participate in an anti-Soviet crusade, and Madrid decided to dispatch a unit under the former commander of the Spanish Blue Division, which was a unit of Spanish volunteers that served in the German Army on the Eastern Front of World War II.²⁶⁵ Spanish involvement in the conflict had the power of shifting public opinion in Spain, which Ibarra cites in his letter to Brundage as a primary reason why the delegation withdrew from the Games. In addition, Spain donated a "part of the money" which would have been used to send its five athletes to Melbourne to a Hungarian relief fund.²⁶⁶

²⁶² Pedro Ybarra Mac-Mahon to Avery Brundage, 19 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 60, Folder: MacMahon, Pedro Ibarra (Baron de Guell), 1953-69; Spain.

²⁶³ Telegram, Spanish Olympic Committee to Avery Brundage, 10 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 148, Folder: Spain, Comite Olimpico Español (1936, 1940, 1946-47, 1952-1962).

²⁶⁴ At a reception commemorating the 59th anniversary of the Hungarian Revolution, Hungarian Ambassador to Spain, Enikő Győri, pointed out: "We will never forget that in 1956, only a country offered military assistance to support the fight against the Soviet intervention, and that country was Spain." For more, see "Hungary Wants a Monument in Madrid to Martyrs of 1956 Revolution," *The Diplomat in Spain*, Oct. 28, 2015, <http://thediplomatinspain.com/en/hungary-wants-a-monument-in-madrid-to-martyrs-of-1956-revolution>.

²⁶⁵ László Borhi, *Dealing with Dictators: The United States, Hungary, and East Central Europe, 1942-1989* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2016), 124.

²⁶⁶ Australian Associated Press, "LEBANON TO BOYCOTT OLYMPICS," *The Canberra Times* (Canberra, Australia), Nov. 12, 1956.

Between the Spanish withdrawal and the opening ceremonies for the Melbourne Games, Mayer let Brundage know that he “. . . intervened without success in spite of all the friends I have [in Spain],” ultimately concluding that the absence of the Spanish was “entirely political.”²⁶⁷ According to Ivan and Iván, however, a primary reason for Spain not attending the Olympic Games was thought to be financial and the Hungarian affair simply provided them a good excuse.²⁶⁸ The C.O.E. ultimately denied Mayer’s final plea to send a single athlete for “at least a symbolic presence,” shutting the door on any Spanish representation at the Games.²⁶⁹ Mayer blamed the current C.O.E. leadership for the withdrawal, contemplating that “. . . if our late member (actually dead) Baron de Guell would have been alive, things would have been different, but our member there – I suppose – has not enough power.”²⁷⁰ The Games went on without Spain in attendance.

On December 10, Otto Mayer met with an unnamed member from the Spanish Olympic Committee, who gave him the full details of how the abstention process played out. According to Mayer, it was only the fault of “ONE Minister who made the proposal at a meeting of the Minister Cabinet under Franco’s direction. The latter did not mind but let his Minister act.”²⁷¹ He continued to mention that Spanish athletes were “furious that they could not go, and they do not agree with their Government,” but their authority as athletes could not supersede the authority of Franco and the Spanish government, which sealed the

²⁶⁷ Otto Mayer to W.S. Kent Hughes, 18 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1956-59).

²⁶⁸ Ivan with Iván, 11.

²⁶⁹ Otto Mayer to W.S. Kent Hughes, 18 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1956-59).

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 11 December 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

delegation's abstention fate.²⁷² Even though the decision not to attend the Games had been settled, Mayer reminded the Spanish O.C. member after the fact of rule 25 in the Olympic Charter, in which the National Olympic Committee should be the supreme authority for "all Olympic matters in its own country."²⁷³

Mayer also met with another unnamed friend the following February, who was understanding of the I.O.C.'s stance in reprimanding the Spanish delegation. His friend, a lawyer and journalist, shared Mayer's sentiment of surprise towards the withdrawal. Mayer used the similar sentiments to influence the man to "write a very good Olympic minded article in the paper 'El Mundo Deportivo' and to tell how the Games have been successful etc."²⁷⁴ The man did so, and the published article is an example of the I.O.C.'s attitude of "burying the hatchet" when it came to the harshness of the reprimands toward boycotting countries. This decision was taken in hopes of glorifying the I.O.C. through positive propaganda to ensure full participation at the 1960 Summer Olympic Games in Rome.

The Netherlands

The intermediary representing the Dutch National Olympic Committee was Colonel Pieter Wilhelmus ("P.W.") Scharroo, who was the Dutch commander in charge during the World War II Battle of Rotterdam. Col. Scharroo was one of the longest-serving members of the International Olympic Committee at the time of the 1956 Melbourne Games, having joined the committee in 1924. He was also one of the biggest critics of hosting the Games in

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ International Olympic Committee, *Olympic Charter – Olympic Rules*, 1 January 1949, 13-14.

²⁷⁴ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 20 February 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1957.

Melbourne, especially considering the organizational failures the organizing committee suffered in the years leading up to the Games.²⁷⁵

Col. Scharroo was also a big believer in the Olympic Movement and its separation from nationalism, having worked at the I.O.C. concurrently with the founder of the movement, Pierre de Coubertin. After notifying Brundage that he could not attend the January 1956 I.O.C. General Session at Cortina d'Ampezzo, Scharroo reminded Brundage in the lead-up to the Games that the advancement of national interests should be avoided in Melbourne and moving forward.²⁷⁶ He proceeded to make recommendations at the meeting in his absence, imploring the president to, "Exaggerate [*sic*] nationalism is one of the greatest dangers of our society . . . Emphasizing national interests on the field of sports will be a deterioration [*sic*] of the Games, as it leads to excesses and makes it difficult to maintain the amateur definition."²⁷⁷ In the same letter, he reminded Brundage that the elimination of all team sports would support this notion, extreme as it was and still is today. The conversation provided rare foresight into the problems that would plague Olympics officials in the weeks leading up to the opening ceremonies.

Colonel Scharroo faced problems within his own national committee before the Dutch withdrawal. On September 3, 1956, the vice president of the Netherlands National

²⁷⁵ "THE PROPAGANDA FOR THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT," n.d., Avery Brundage Collection, Box 62, Folder: Scharroo, Col. P.W., 1946-1957, 1960-61, Netherlands; Col. Scharroo told Brundage, "It was first of all a great mistake that the I.O.C. entrusted to the City of Melbourne, the honour of organising the Games of 1956." With the wheels already turning in organizing the Melbourne Games, however, Scharroo concluded by admitting, "But we have to accept the consequences of this decision and after the resolution, taken at the session of Mexico City, it is now impossible and it would be a breach of faith to withdraw; the Games from Melbourne."

²⁷⁶ Col. P.W. Scharroo to Avery Brundage, 15 January 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 62, Folder: Scharroo, Col. P.W., 1946-1957, 1960-61, Netherlands.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

Olympic Committee, referred to as “Lotsi” by Otto Mayer, had confidently notified the I.O.C. that in the 25 years that Scharroo was a member of the delegation, he had never attended a single meeting held by the N.O.C. In Mayer’s narration of his conversation with Lotsi to Brundage, the vice president told Mayer, “He is not persona grata there . . . if Scharroo would enter in the meeting room of the NOC. the President and others would go out ! He has no touch at all with sport anymore and is of no use at all.”²⁷⁸ When asked if the I.O.C. should intervene, however, Lotsi had no objection to Scharroo’s membership and “. . . just wanted to give . . . objective information about him.”²⁷⁹ As the intermediary between the I.O.C. and the Dutch N.O.C., this was a cause for concern with the 1956 Melbourne Games rapidly approaching. Mayer went as far as asking Brundage to inquire with Prince Bernhard of Lippe-Biesterfeld, whom Brundage had a personal relationship with, about Scharroo’s conduct, but Brundage assured him that the situation would “. . . take care of itself, I imagine, very shortly.”²⁸⁰

The athletes from the Netherlands tried not to let the haphazard leadership of its National Olympic Committee interfere with its upcoming attendance at the upcoming Games in Melbourne. The Dutch were coming off a solid performance at the 1952 Helsinki Summer Olympic Games, in which it brought home five silver medals, three of which came in swimming events. The Dutch team had already sent its one athlete competing in the equestrian events in Stockholm, Alexis Pantchoulidzew, who also held the distinction of

²⁷⁸ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 3 September 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer, 10 September 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

being the eldest participant at the Games at the age of 67. He finished 28th overall in the individual dressage event on a horse named Lascar.

The Dutch planned to send 70 competitors and officials to Melbourne to compete, with “Only athletes with a reasonable chance of reaching the finals . . . [allowed to] make the trip.”²⁸¹ In a symbolic gesture of its participation at the Games, Dutch officials sent the seeds of black pansies for the purpose of arranging for a “spectacular flower bed at the entrance to [the] athletes’ Olympic Village for the Olympic Games.”²⁸² The flower bed was planned to be 150 feet in diameter and would include flowers for each of the colors of the Olympic rings, with the Dutch providing the materials for the center ring. The Dutch commitment to its inclusion was present in its lead-up to the Games, but the outbreak of violence in Hungary a few weeks before the opening ceremonies would alter these plans.

This was not the first time the Netherlands had threatened to abstain from the Olympic Games. Just four years earlier, the Dutch threatened to boycott the 1952 Helsinki Summer Olympic Games if West Germany had been allowed to compete.²⁸³ Otto Mayer attempted to intervene in the Netherlands’ decision to boycott on November 5, as a telegram sent to the Dutch N.O.C. stated:

Without wishing to take us into your committee’s internal affairs, you recall that the Olympic Games serve to bring people together and that participation by all countries is desirable to fulfill humanitarian task and peace. In spite of unfortunate

²⁸¹ News Release, Organizing Committee of the XVI Olympiad, n.d., Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (News Releases, Australian News and Information Bureau).

²⁸² *Ibid.*

²⁸³ “May boycott 1952 Games,” *The News* (Adelaide, South Australia, Australia), May 18, 1950; The article also reported that Norway, Belgium and Denmark “might join in the boycott.” The Netherlands ultimately competed in Helsinki for the Games, winning five silver medals.

troubles we must demonstrate to the world that sport and Olympic ideals must prevail on political divergences.²⁸⁴

A telegram from Dutch Olympic Committee Secretary Dr. J.N. van den Houton confirmed on November 7 that the meeting resulted in a withdrawal of the Dutch delegation, chiefly due to developments coming from Hungary regarding Russian participation.²⁸⁵ Mayer urged the committee to reconsider, allowing the delegation to compete if they would simply rescind its withdrawal.²⁸⁶ Writing from The Hague, Colonel Scharroo informed Brundage on November 8 of the committee's intention to withdraw from the Olympic Games, citing that the committee took the decision due to the fact that “. . . we went through the same situation as Hungary now in 1944, when the Germans left Holland to make a new appearance after the battle of Arnhem, more cruel as ever before.”²⁸⁷ Netherlands I.O.C. member C.F. Pahud de Mortanges seconded this reasoning, telling Mayer that the nation had “not forgotten how they have suffered . . . during the Nazi's occupation during the last war.”²⁸⁸

²⁸⁴ Telegram, Otto Mayer to Netherlands Olympic Committee, 5 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 140, Folder: Netherlands, Netherlands Olympic Committee.

²⁸⁵ Dr. J.N. van den Houton to IOC, 12 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 140, Folder: Netherlands, Netherlands Olympic Committee.

²⁸⁶ Telegram, Otto Mayer to Netherlands Olympic Committee, 7 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 140, Folder: Netherlands, Netherlands Olympic Committee.

²⁸⁷ Col. P.W. Scharroo and C.F. Pahud de Mortanges to Avery Brundage, 8 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 140, Folder: Netherlands, Netherlands Olympic Committee; Relating specifically to the situation in Hungary, the Representatives of the National Associations of Sports in the Netherlands stated, “that since and as a result of the events in Hungary these days no such possibility is left with regard to official Soviet'russian participants; that, furthermore, the sphere caused by these events is incompatible with the celebration of an Olympic Festival.” For more, see “The Representatives of the National Associations of Sports in the Netherlands. . .,” n.d., Avery Brundage Collection, Box 140, Folder: Netherlands, Netherlands Olympic Committee.

²⁸⁸ Otto Mayer to W.S. Kent Hughes, 18 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1956-59).

This experience defined the Dutch attitudes toward the Hungarian Revolution and, consequently, the abstention from the Melbourne Games. Despite the disaster following the aftermath of the Battle of Arnhem, Dutch citizens considered their fight in the battle as “an example of courage and endurance” and “one of the greatest feats of arms in the Second World War.”²⁸⁹ The Netherlands was invaded by German troops on August 10, 1940, and surrendered to the forces five days later. The attack was launched with “blatant disregard” for the policy of neutrality and independence which the country had pursued for many years which Adolf Hitler, in repeated public declarations, had promised to respect.²⁹⁰ According to German professor Gerhard Hirschfeld, the German invasion found the country “psychologically and militarily unprepared . . . For the population, and especially those people in the densely populated western areas, it came as a severe shock.”²⁹¹ The German occupation would define the state of affairs in the Netherlands over the course of World War II.

German influence began to deteriorate in the summer of 1944 following the success of the Allied troops in the Invasion of Normandy. The British 1st Airborne Division had the task of resupplying the Allied troops, whose resources had run short, and the only area of occupied Europe that it could reach from its existing base was in Holland.²⁹² The operation made massed use of airborne forces, whose tactical objectives were to secure the

²⁸⁹ John Waddy, *A Tour of the Arnhem Battlefields* (Barnsley, South Yorkshire, United Kingdom: Pen and Sword Books Ltd., 1999), 10; Cornelius Ryan, *A Bridge Too Far* (Ware, Hertfordshire, United Kingdom: Wordsworth Editions, 1999), 541.

²⁹⁰ Gerhard Hirschfeld, *Nazi Rule and Dutch Collaboration: The Netherlands under German Occupation 1940-1945* (New York: Berg Publishers, 1988), 12.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁹² Martin Middlebrook, *Arnhem 1944: The Airborne Battle, 17-26 September* (New York: Penguin Group, 1994), 6.

bridges and allow a rapid advance by armored ground units to consolidate north of Arnhem. The British 1st Airborne Division and the Polish 1st Independent Parachute Brigade were given the task of securing the bridge at Arnhem, where they met strong resistance from the Germans, starting the Battle of Arnhem.

The campaign was unsuccessful for the Allied forces and ultimately damaged the quality of life for the Dutch in its aftermath, with the largest domestic cost for the Netherlands being the “Hongerwinter,” a famine that is estimated to have killed 18,000 people in the German-occupied Netherlands.²⁹³ British historian Martin Middlebrook somberly wrote, “Poor Holland . . . remained cut off in German hands and suffering severe hunger until the end of the war . . . The battle had brought only suffering, hardship and disappointment to the people of Arnhem and Oosterbeek.”²⁹⁴ By the end of the war, 205,901 Dutch men and women had died of war-related causes, with the Netherlands holding the highest per capita death rate of all Nazi-occupied countries in Western Europe (2.41%).²⁹⁵ Over half (107,000) of these casualties were Holocaust victims, deported and murdered Jews.

The immediate reaction from the Dutch regarding its N.O.C.’s abstention had been bittersweet, as Scharroo noted that, “The Olympic ideals are still living in Holland . . . but at the moment there is a lack of cheerfull [*sic*] sporty feelings necessary for a team to

²⁹³ Henri A. van der Zee, *The Hunger Winter: Occupied Holland 1944-1945* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 304-305.

²⁹⁴ Middlebrook, 446-449.

²⁹⁵ Joop Garssen and Carel Harmsen, *210 Duizend Oorlogsslachtoffers*, Population Trends, Q4 (2007), distributed by Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, <https://www.cbs.nl/NR/rdonlyres/1FA7DF00-F612-4F46-8539-E04DCFEC7BA/0/2007k4b15p53art.pdf>.

participate at the feast of the Olympic Games.”²⁹⁶ As Mortanges noted to Mayer, however, “80 percent of the people in Holland were in favour of the abstention.”²⁹⁷ As reported by the Australian Associated Press, the Dutch swimming and water polo teams selected to compete in Melbourne took part in benefit events for Hungarian refugees, signaling that the athletes themselves similarly reflected disgust for the violence in the country.²⁹⁸ However, some Dutch athletes learned of its nation’s abstention even after arriving in the Olympic Village in Melbourne, feeling the sting of being told that they could not compete even after years of hard work and preparation. For instance, Cocky Gaastelaars, a Dutch swimmer who held the world record in the 100 meter freestyle, expressed disappointment with the decision. Ada Kok, a teammate of Gastelaar who would later go on to assume the presidency of the Dutch Olympians Association, recalls that, “Some athletes were already present in Melbourne to train and they were whistled back home by the Dutch Olympic Committee and the Dutch Government . . . For Cocky this was a traumatic decision as this was her chance to win a gold medal being a world-record holder.”²⁹⁹ The abstention dealt a big blow to the athletes who had already gathered in Melbourne, but there was no action they could take to divide politics’ influence on the country’s abstention.

An interesting perspective regarding the Dutch withdrawal came one week after the Dutch N.O.C.’s announcement to abstain. Jan Geoff, a representative of the Royal

²⁹⁶ Col. P.W. Scharroo and C.F. Pahud de Mortanges to Avery Brundage, 8 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 140, Folder: Netherlands, Netherlands Olympic Committee.

²⁹⁷ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 11 December 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

²⁹⁸ “LEBANON TO BOYCOTT OLYMPICS.”

²⁹⁹ Roy Tomizawa, “The Dutch Boycott of the 1956 Olympic Games Part 2: Rehabilitation,” *The Olympians from 1964 to 2020*, Feb. 27, 2016, <https://theolympians.co/2016/02/27/the-dutch-boycott-of-the-1956-olympic-games-part-2-rehabilitation>.

Netherlands Yachting Union in Amsterdam, wrote to a colleague, Ernest R. Scott Esq., in Melbourne regarding the N.O.C.'s decision to withdraw and the pushback it received from the yachtsmen. He details that the majority of the yachting union opposed the decision to withdraw because of its conviction that "the Olympic ideal should be upheld."³⁰⁰ Mr. Geoff confirmed to Mr. Scott that the Olympic Committee's chief reason for not attending was due to the "Russian outrage in Hungary," which "resulted in the feeling that no decent Dutchman can or may have anything to do with the Russian."³⁰¹ He also noted that following World War I, a "great many Hungarian children were brought up in Dutch families, that there is an intense sympathy for the Hungarian people."³⁰² This sympathetic account, despite disagreeing with the N.O.C., captures the disposition of Holland coming off a brutal World War II campaign.

Mr. Scott's wife, Mrs. L. Scott, had forwarded the letter on December 3 to Brundage's wife, Elizabeth Dunlap Brundage, who was still in Melbourne with her husband for the Games. Mrs. Scott requested his attention by writing that the Dutch yachtsmen, "tried to uphold the Olympic ideals."³⁰³ Brundage appreciated the letter, replying, "I am glad to have this report on the situation there which led to the withdrawal of the Dutch Team. They must look very foolish now that they see the Hungarian Team

³⁰⁰ Jan Geoff to Ernest R. Scott Esq., 15 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 140, Folder: Netherlands, Netherlands Olympic Committee.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ladie Scott to Elizabeth Dunlap Brundage, n.d., Avery Brundage Collection, Box 162, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad – Melbourne, Australia, 1956-General (1956-1960).

itself participating here,” which was a justification he frequently used in assigning blame to the boycotting countries.³⁰⁴

The Dutch N.O.C. proved to be a pain for the I.O.C. in the months following the Melbourne Games, providing a newfound voice against nationalism following its withdrawal. In a press release to several news organizations, the Dutch delegation declared, “The Dutch O.C. will ask the I.O.C. the cancellation of the resolution taken in Melbourne through which it blamed Holland and a few other countries (among which Switzerland) for not having sent delegates to Australia,”³⁰⁵ A few days later, on April 29, 1957, Mayer received two letters from the Dutch committee lodging a formal protest against the I.O.C. regarding this issue. The first letter iterated its opinion of a resolution taken at Melbourne, and which concluded by demanding, “either to change the text of said Resolution or to cancel the name of their country !”³⁰⁶ Regarding this final remark, Mayer doubted Brundage would change his opinion regarding where to place blame. In his reply to Mayer on May 11, he wished to clarify that the I.O.C. did not blame the Olympic committees that abstained from participation, but “only expressed our sorrow and regret.”³⁰⁷

The second letter protested several aspects of the Olympic ceremonies that promoted nationalist sentiment, and it proposed several solutions ranging from suppression

³⁰⁴ Avery Brundage to Ladie Scott, 6 December 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 162, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad – Melbourne, Australia, 1956-General (1956-1960).

³⁰⁵ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 18 April 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1957.

³⁰⁶ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 29 April 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1957; Otto Mayer later sent an apology for a “translation error” in which he stated that I.O.C. “never intended to ‘blame’ the Dutch N.O.C., but “merely ‘expressed his sadness and regret’” for the abstentions. For more, see Otto Mayer to Nederlandsch Olympisch Comité, 17 June 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 140, Folder: Netherlands, Netherlands Olympic Committee.

³⁰⁷ Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer, 11 May 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1957.

of national flags to requiring all athletes to wear the same clothing during the opening and closing ceremonies. Mayer pointed out that the protest was “written in an idealistic way which has no sense at all.”³⁰⁸ Dr. Wim Van Zyl, the Dutch Olympic Committee manager, responded to this comment in an Associated Press report by stating that the withdrawal was in response to the crisis in Hungary, which justified withdrawal “on grounds of human consideration.”³⁰⁹

Jean Weymann, the secretary of Switzerland’s National Olympic Committee, traveled to the Netherlands in April to analyze the Dutch delegation’s situation. He told Mayer that things were “not going well at all over there,” citing several resignations and meetings met with agitation.³¹⁰ Those who resigned strongly advised against the Dutch withdrawal. Those who were in favor of the delegation’s stance of non-participation, however, alleged support from the government and the general populous to justify its decision.

In hopes of starting off on the right foot in preparing for the next Summer Olympic Games, another setback plagued the Dutch Committee. Mortanges expressed regret in notifying the I.O.C. of his absence for the upcoming I.O.C. General Session to be held in Sofia, Bulgaria, in September 1957, due to a “bad fit of arthritis.”³¹¹ He confessed to Brundage that, paired with the chronic string of absences of Scharroo, that he was, “. . .

³⁰⁸ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 18 April 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1957.

³⁰⁹ Newspaper Clipping, “Here’s a Way for Olympics to ‘Go Dutch,’” 14 April 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 140, Folder: Netherlands, Netherlands Olympic Committee.

³¹⁰ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 15 April 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1957.

³¹¹ Charles Ferdinand Pahud de Mortanges to Avery Brundage, 15 September 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 61, Folder: Mortanges, C.F. Pahud de, 1954, 1958-60, 1964; Netherlands.

uneasy about my absence in connection with the fact that Holland did not appear at the Games in Melbourne.”³¹² Absolving his fears, the absence was excused by Brundage and the Netherlands would set course to return to the Summer Olympic Games in 1960.

Switzerland

Albert Mayer, the I.O.C. member representing Switzerland and brother of I.O.C. Chancellor Otto Mayer, assumed the role of the middleman of communications between the Swiss Olympic Association (COS) in Bern and the I.O.C. in Lausanne. Like the actions of other I.O.C. members representing countries who would inevitably boycott the Games in Melbourne, Albert Mayer wrote to Brundage on August 15, 1956, to express his regret in personally abstaining from traveling to Melbourne for the Games, as his wife was expecting a child in November, the month of the opening ceremonies.³¹³ Brundage understood completely, telling him that, “. . . in the circumstances, of course, you must remain at home.”³¹⁴

The correspondence was routine, other than for a minor grouse at the foot of Mayer’s letter. After telling Brundage the news, he proceeded to state, “Beside that, my enthusiasm for Melbourne has vanished . . . I feel rather glad not to meet people which first have to learn how to behave on international sport plan.”³¹⁵ He was referring to Australian press accounts relating to the mishaps leading up to the opening ceremonies, including

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Albert Mayer to Avery Brundage, 15 August 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 60, Folder: Mayer, Albert, 1946-1947, 1951-1969, Switzerland.

³¹⁴ Avery Brundage to Albert Mayer, 28 August 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 60, Folder: Mayer, Albert, 1946-1947, 1951-1969, Switzerland.

³¹⁵ Albert Mayer to Avery Brundage, 15 August 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 60, Folder: Mayer, Albert, 1946-1947, 1951-1969, Switzerland.

Brundage's poor leadership and inability to resolve these issues. Signaling to this issue, the Swiss representative had showed early skepticism to the organization of the Games, planting a seed of doubt in its operations, unknowing of the events that would soon follow.

The Swiss Olympic team had planned to depart for Melbourne on November 11, eager to leave the continent as quickly as possible due to the political unrest in neighboring Hungary. Upon hearing about the revolution in Germany, however, the COS organized a meeting in Lausanne headed by its president, Marcell Henninger of Geneva. Henninger's initial position regarding participation was full support, but pressures from one certain delegation provided an obstacle to this opinion. The Société Fédérale de Gymnastique (SFG), the governing body of male-only gymnastics in the country, opposed the president's participation; it held a large stake in the N.O.C.'s decision-making process moving forward. Based in German-speaking Aarau, most of the federation's leadership was composed of German Swiss, the majority population within the delegation that contended for abstention.³¹⁶ Otto Mayer, a French Swiss native, painted the situation in his letters as a conflict between the French and Swiss German participants, with the French Swiss favoring participation while the German Swiss, primarily coming from the SFG, pushed for the withdrawal of the entire Swiss delegation.

The rationale for the German Swiss was related to the global political climate and dealt directly with the Soviet involvement in the Hungarian Revolution. The official paper

³¹⁶ Otto Mayer notes that all the leaders of the Société Fédérale de Gymnastique were from the German-speaking region of Switzerland, with exception of one man from Geneva, who would "courageously abstain" from votes regarding abstention. For more, see Otto Mayer to W.S. Kent Hughes, 18 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1956-59).

of the SFG, acquired by Mayer, noted that the federation's relations with Russia and Eastern European countries was problematic, and he argued that the situation was ". . . all political. Not a word about sport."³¹⁷ The influence of the German Swiss section of the delegation pushed the COS not to participate at the Melbourne Games due to the "invasion of Russia into Hungaria."³¹⁸

The I.O.C. caught wind of a possible abstention as early as November 7, as Otto Mayer intervened in the Swiss decision-making process and urged the delegation to reconsider, noting that ". . . only one country has formally declared forfeit to Melbourne," hoping that the Swiss were not influenced by its neighboring delegations in the continent.³¹⁹ This first decision taken by the Swiss was to withdrawal. This was guided solely by a stipulation that favored the German Swiss view of abstention: all sporting federations in the country whose entries were given to the COS "must participate or nobody goes to Melbourne."³²⁰ The Swiss German gymnasts were steadfast against attending the Games, triggering this ultimatum. This action would prompt action from the I.O.C., which did not yet view the decision of the Swiss as final.

Directly following this first instance of abstention from the Swiss, Otto Mayer called the situation "very embarrassing," admitting that, "If my country does not

³¹⁷ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 21 February 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1957.

³¹⁸ Report, "from Albert R. Mayer Member of the IOC about renouncement to participate at the Melbourne Olympic Games by The Swiss Olympic Committee," 19 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 60, Folder: Mayer, Albert, 1946-1947, 1951-1969, Switzerland.

³¹⁹ Telegram, Otto Mayer to Comité Olympique Suisse, 7 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 162, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad – Melbourne, Australia, 1956-General (1956-1960).

³²⁰ Otto Mayer to W.S. Kent Hughes, 18 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1956-59).

participate, I and all my French-speaking friends will be disgusted.”³²¹ With prodding from the I.O.C. and Otto Mayer, the Swiss delegation agreed to meet again in Bern on November 11, the day which the team had originally planned to depart for Melbourne.

This second meeting included each of the Swiss national federations that were expected to have sports competing at the Melbourne Games. A consensus was reached in contrast to the decision that was made at the first meeting: If the Swiss gymnasts chose not to participate in the Melbourne Games, its absence would not affect any other delegation’s desire to attend.³²² Otto Mayer reported that after three hours of discussions, the committee had voted 15-8 in favor of participating, much to the delight of the I.O.C. chancellor.³²³ At that present moment, arrangements in finding transportation for the Swiss team was the top priority, as the aircraft it had originally planned to travel in was given to United Nations peacekeepers to transport troops to Cairo to deal with the Suez Crisis.

In addition to the decision made, a unanimous vote by the 23 Swiss national federations was taken to suggest to the I.O.C. a new article in the Olympic Charter. The text of the proposed article read:

Athletes from countries which are in a state of war (not only de jure, but also de facto), may not participate in the Olympic Games. The International Olympic Committee may nevertheless, in view of the circumstances, or in order to foster the cause of peace, authorize the participation of such athletes, but only after the conclusion of an armistice or at least a cease-fire.³²⁴

³²¹ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 8 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

³²² Otto Mayer to W.S. Kent Hughes, 18 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1956-59).

³²³ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 11 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.; Otto Mayer told Brundage, “Never mind we have won and the Olympic Spirit was strong than all political interventions. I am most happy.”

³²⁴ Report, “COMITE OLYMPIQUE SUISSE,” 11 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 148, Folder: Switzerland, Comité Olympique Suisse (1937-1939, 1946, 1954-1969).

The article embodied the ideals of the country it represented, as the delegation attempted to push the principle of Swiss neutrality into the framework of the Olympic Games. The article specifically pertained to the Soviet Union and the violence that was incited on its behest in Hungary.

The writers of the article had good intentions; they sought to preserve the peace through a peace-time institution and restrained from “demanding of athletes from countries at war, who are bound to the destiny of their homeland, that they join in peaceful sports contests with one another.”³²⁵ Referring to this last point, the example of the violent “Blood in the Water” match between Hungary and the U.S.S.R. would have never happened under this proposed article.

However, the proposed article violated the I.O.C.’s vehement renunciation of the intersection of sport and politics, as it explicitly recognized aspects of war and recommended changes in policy to merge the two spheres. Otto Mayer expressed skepticism towards its approval by Brundage and the rest of the I.O.C. leadership, reminding COS president Henninger that Brundage declared individuals, not nations, would compete at the Games.³²⁶ Mayer notified the Swiss committee’s secretary general, Jean Weymann, that the article was not adopted by the I.O.C.³²⁷

The decision to attend the Olympic Games in Melbourne did not hold for long. Henninger mailed the I.O.C. office secretary, Madame Lydia Zanchi, of the COS’s

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Otto Mayer to Marcel Henninger, 20 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 148, Folder: Switzerland, Comité Olympique Suisse (1937-1939, 1946, 1954-1969).

³²⁷ Otto Mayer to Jean Weymann, 1 February 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 148, Folder: Switzerland, Comité Olympique Suisse (1937-1939, 1946, 1954-1969).

intention to withdraw from the Melbourne Games. The delegation recognized its anticipation of the pushback it would receive from the I.O.C., readily prepared for any penalties it could assume due to the decision.³²⁸

An official report dated November 19 declared a formal notice of the Swiss' abstention from the Melbourne Games. In the report, Albert Mayer detailed that Swiss Air could not find a replacement for the aircraft that was originally supposed to transport the Swiss athletes and could not find any further luck through other transportation companies; this forced the Swiss delegation to remain at home.³²⁹ While the report mentioned the successful 15-8 vote in favor of going to Melbourne, the "transportation difficulties have definitively cancelled [the] voyage," and Mayer expressed that he tried his hardest to make the trip conceivable.

Brundage announced the abstention of Switzerland, along with the rest of the boycotting countries, at the I.O.C. General Session in Melbourne right before the opening ceremonies. He considered the withdrawal of the Swiss delegation to be the "most surprising," noting the impossibility of travel at such a late notice.³³⁰ The initial reaction from Otto Mayer, indeed, was disgust, placing blame on the SFG which was "alone responsible," creating, "quite a revolution in this country between Swiss Germans and [the

³²⁸ Marcel Henninger to Otto Mayer, 16 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 148, Folder: Switzerland, Comité Olympique Suisse (1937-1939, 1946, 1954-1969).

³²⁹ A plane was found at the very last second, but the cost was too extraordinary for either the I.O.C. or the COS to cover. The Swiss government also chose not to interfere with the U.N., and due to the delay, the Swiss delegation's team doctor did not want to take any responsibility in transporting athletes in "such bad conditions." For more, see Otto Mayer to W.S. Kent Hughes, 18 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1956-59).

³³⁰ Minutes of the 52nd General Session of the IOC, Melbourne, Australia, 19-21 November and 4 December 1956, 4, IOCL.

I.O.C.]”³³¹ He ultimately called the decision “disgusting,” but, “unfortunately irrevocable . . . stirring revolution in Swiss sport.”³³² He noted that the blame fell solely on the German Swiss, as he claimed, “All the leaders of Gymnastic in the French part of this country are Olympic minded and do agree with our opinions, but not the german.”³³³

Despite the absence of the Swiss delegation, Otto Mayer had a trick up his sleeve to make sure his fellow Swiss were represented in Melbourne. Under the guise of the COS and with permission from Henninger, Weymann, and his brother Albert, Mayer requested the I.O.C., on November 15, to authorize Hans Steinacher, a fencing athlete, to participate in the opening ceremonies as the bearer of the Switzerland flag.³³⁴ Steinacher was already working at the Swiss Legation in Melbourne and had planned on participating in the Games, so he became a natural candidate for the position that Mayer was proposing. Thus, Switzerland had a sole representative in Melbourne at the 1956 Games despite its abstention. Mayer wrote to Hughes that through Steinacher, they were “. . . able to represent our country with the flag, showing at least the wish of the Swiss to be present, but retained ONLY by technical impossibility in finding a plane.”³³⁵

³³¹ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 8 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

³³² Telegram, Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 10 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

³³³ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 21 February 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1957.

³³⁴ Telegram, Swiss Olympic Committee to Melbourne Organizing Committee, 15 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1956-59); This is the only confirmed appearance of Mr. Steinacher at the Olympic Games, as he never competed for the Swiss fencing team before or after his stint as the flagbearer for Switzerland.

³³⁵ Otto Mayer to W.S. Kent Hughes, 18 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1956-59).

Two Swiss Olympic officials were present in Melbourne at the time of the COS's decision to withdraw from the Games. The men were Gaston Mullegg, the president of the World Rowing Federation (FISA), and Kurt Gassmann, the general secretary of Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA). Brundage mentioned that he had discussed with them the topic of the abstention, of which both expressed indignancy towards the action of their home committee.³³⁶ Mullegg went as far as to ask Brundage and the I.O.C. to withdraw recognition from the Swiss team, but Brundage rebuffed that request. Mullegg told him that he would resign as soon as he returned to Switzerland, but would first become involved in bridging the divide between the French Swiss and German Swiss in their attitudes regarding the abstention of their delegation.³³⁷

Marcel Henninger received a letter from an unnamed acquaintance³³⁸ who was familiar with the politics of the Swiss withdrawal. The individual opined that it was “. . . very dangerous to decide Swiss participation could depend on the ‘veto’ of a single federation . . . if the gymnasts did not want to go to Melbourne, there was no reason to stop the other 6 sports from leaving.”³³⁹ The SFG proved its dominance in the COS by superseding the decision-making process within the organization, but it also adopted the role of scapegoat with anyone who disagreed with the final decision not to travel to Melbourne. Since the final decision not to travel was so close to the beginning of the

³³⁶ Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer, 26 December 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

³³⁷ Mullegg did not resign, but did not oversee another Olympic Games due to his untimely death in 1958 when he crashed his plane in the vicinity of Lausanne.

³³⁸ The author could not be identified from the source; Unknown to Marcel Henninger, 9 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 148, Folder: Switzerland, Comité Olympique Suisse (1937-1939, 1946, 1954-1969).

³³⁹ Ibid.

opening ceremonies, any hope the other six Swiss sports had to travel without the SFG was dashed. Henninger was advised by his acquaintance that he should “try the impossible” and send the teams to Melbourne, but this was ultimately decided against as the Swiss were not represented at the event.³⁴⁰

Troubles between the I.O.C. and the SFG continued following the closing ceremonies of the Melbourne Games. The federation disapproved of Otto Mayer’s attempts to intervene in the COS’s decision to withdraw prior to the Games and called for his resignation, in which it disagreed with the position he had taken regarding the abstention. According to Mayer, the federation claimed that he could not, “. . . judge as [he had] never controlled [himself] in which conditions they are.”³⁴¹ It claimed that Mayer’s position had “become impossible,” and stated that, “A Swiss who expresses himself in such a way against Swiss Gymnastic is not any more in a position to represent Swiss Gymnastic and Sport of Switzerland in the IOC.”³⁴²

According to the German Swiss petition, Otto Mayer declared that the gymnasts should solely abstain “after having lost their two best gymnasts . . . because they did not want to show the World the decadence of the Swiss Gymnastic,” which Mayer vehemently denied.³⁴³ Although Albert Mayer received the petition from the gymnasts and hesitantly

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 21 February 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1957.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 12 January 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1957; Mayer followed up this statement by saying, “We shall see in 1960 if this is true or not !,” referencing the Swiss gymnastic team’s success in the 1960 Summer Olympic Games in Rome. The Swiss did not take home any medals that year; in fact, the Swiss gymnastic team would not win another medal at the Summer Olympic Games until 1996, when Li Donghua won gold in the men’s pommel horse event in Atlanta.

forwarded it to his brother in Lausanne, he expressed his disapproval with their request and notified Brundage of his thoughts, telling him, “Personally I cannot agree to that proposal and you will know why.”³⁴⁴ Mayer refrained from giving Brundage the full details as he recognized that Brundage had “other duties to fulfill,” as the letter was sent in the midst of the Melbourne Games.³⁴⁵

Avery Brundage was outraged with the proposal that he led his reply to the COS by stating, “There are so many glaring misconceptions in the Gymnastique Soci   letter that it hardly deserves a reply.”³⁴⁶ He recognized that if Otto Mayer had made the statement to the press that angered the Swiss gymnasts, which he doubted, he presumed that he, “. . . was speaking as a Swiss citizen and we understand that free speech is still permitted in Switzerland.”³⁴⁷

Mayer characterized the scuffle as the dawn of a new “Swiss sport revolution,” which had no foreseeable end in sight. He noted that “Many leaders [were] resigning and it is not at an end.”³⁴⁸ Brundage recommended to Mayer that, “The best thing is to let them stew in their own Juice. They must feel very stupid.”³⁴⁹ Otto Mayer took the issue very personally, understandably because of his ties to the country and due to the harshness of

³⁴⁴ Albert R. Mayer to Avery Brundage, 27 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 60, Folder: Mayer, Albert, 1946-1947, 1951-1969, Switzerland.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Avery Brundage to Comit   Olympique Suisse, 28 February 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 148, Folder: Switzerland, Comit   Olympique Suisse (1937-1939, 1946, 1954-1969).

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Otto Mayer to W.S. Kent Hughes, 18 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1956-59).

³⁴⁹ Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer, 22 January 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1957.

the German Swiss portion of the COS in its attacks.³⁵⁰ He went as far as telling them that, given their “attitude,” the Games would not be given to Switzerland for “another Century.”³⁵¹ His overreaction was hyperbolic in the moment, as the Swiss delegation would resume a path to participation with the upcoming Winter and Summer Olympic Games in 1960.

Led by Albert Mayer and Mullegg, the COS met for the first time following the Melbourne Games on January 4, 1957, which Otto Mayer predicted would have “some trouble,” as the “situation between german and french speaking Switzerland is still divided.”³⁵² Albert Mayer reported that the meeting including “nothing special,” although the delegation felt “very upset and feel the great error which has been made in not going to Melbourne.”³⁵³ It was later revealed that Mullegg was not in attendance, as “he was afraid to loose [*sic*] his nerves and them . . . what he thinks about [the SFG].”³⁵⁴

³⁵⁰ In his recommendation to Brundage in how to discipline the Swiss Olympic Association, he wrote, “You tell the Swiss Olympic Committee that you are sorry for what Otto Mayer SWISS CITIZEN WHO IS STILL FREE TO SAY WHAT HE THINKS, and not the chancellor, said. Than I know what I have to do.” For more, see Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 21 February 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1957.

³⁵¹ Otto Mayer to W.S. Kent Hughes, 18 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1956-59).

³⁵² Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 3 January 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1957.

³⁵³ Otto Mayer to Avery Brundage, 11 January 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1957.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

Avery Brundage delivered a televised speech as the “Guest of Honor” of the Australian Broadcasting Commission on November 25, 1956, three days following the opening ceremonies. Opening his remarks by mentioning the “troubled conditions in different parts of the world,” he heralded the spirit of “peace, harmony, and international co-operation” present in the host city of Melbourne, alluding to the “Olympic truce” that the committee had revived from ancient times.³⁵⁵ Despite the international troubles and the lack of progress in organizing the Games, he noted that he saw upon his arrival to the city a “completely different picture” demonstrated by a flawless execution of the opening ceremonies.³⁵⁶

The 1956 Summer Olympics in Melbourne ended up being a remarkable success, with the political events and disorganization preceding the Games largely receding to the background. Brundage noted that the Games were, “. . . a tremendous success in every particular, and not only Melbourne but the whole of Australia became inoculated with the Olympic spirit. In this respect they were the greatest Olympic Games ever held.”³⁵⁷ In recalling the spectacle of the Games with Madame Zanchi, Brundage said that, “Everybody in Australia seemed to have captured the Olympic spirit and they said they would never be the same again. It was a great triumph for the Olympic Movement.”³⁵⁸

³⁵⁵ Australian Broadcasting Commission “Guest of Honour” speech by Avery Brundage, 25 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1956-59).

³⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁷ Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer, 26 December 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

³⁵⁸ Avery Brundage to Madame Zanchi, 3 January 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1957.

The Melbourne Summer Olympic Games experienced a severe drop in participation compared to the Games held in Helsinki just four years before, despite holding events in the same number of sporting events: 4,925 athletes represented 69 nations in Helsinki, while only 3,342 athletes representing 67 nations competed in Melbourne.³⁵⁹ Before the announcement of the abstentions had occurred, French I.O.C. member Count Jean de Beaumont had expected a 30 to 40 percent drop in the number of athletes participating, but Brundage was confident that there would be, “. . . between 5 to 6,000 athletes competing.”³⁶⁰

Despite the flashes of anger, remarks historian Allen Guttman, the 1956 Summer Olympic Games were “remarkably ironic.”³⁶¹ At the closing ceremony, athletes broke ranks from their own national teams and, rather than march as members of their national teams, joined hands, embraced, sang, and danced. Together, Guttman notes, they “created one of the more humane traditions in modern sports.”³⁶² This would be the first instance of a tradition that has continued up to the present day, a gesture that embodies a shift away from nationalism in the modern Olympic Movement.

Australian citizens and media members cautiously praised the success of the Games. As Graeme Davison notes, “Only when the Games were finally over, and nothing had gone seriously wrong, did Melburnians permit themselves a moment of self-congratulation.”³⁶³ Melbourne had sought the Games to impress the rest of the world but,

³⁵⁹ Senn, 79. Broken down by male and female competitors, Helsinki had 4,407 male competitors and 518 female competitors, while Melbourne had only 2,958 male competitors and 384 female competitors.

³⁶⁰ Minutes of the 51st General Session of the IOC, Cortina D’Ampezzo, 24-25 January 1956, 10, IOCL.

³⁶¹ Allen Guttman, *The Olympics: A History of the Modern Games*, 101.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Davison, 75.

as the *Herald's* Douglas Wilkie observed, "It is now clear that what the world may gain from adjusting itself to Melbourne is nothing compared with Melbourne's gain from adjusting itself to the world."³⁶⁴ However, Wilkie also felt that the Games had made a difference, stating, "By being allowed to play the host city we've grown up overnight from a spotty-faced adolescent to something approaching maturity."³⁶⁵ The success of the Games provided a major leap in growth for the Australian city and proved to be an successful effort in hosting a global event.

The reaction from some Australian officials, however, displayed an opposite belief that required drastic reorganization at the international level. According to a statement retrieved by a news editor in Switzerland, Australian Olympic sources announced a bid was made to move the I.O.C. headquarters from Lausanne to Australia, noting that "Switzerland's wavering on whether to attend the Melbourne games and swiss i.o.c. Chancellor Otto Mayer's ill health would be the chief arguments in favor of australia's case."³⁶⁶ Mayer justly labeled the report as a "stupid story," finding the proposal not only outrageous, but impossible.³⁶⁷

Mayer was heartbroken by the news, telling Brundage, "I was nearly to regret all what I did."³⁶⁸ Once Brundage heard the news, he called it "absurd," noting that, "Our headquarters must remain in Europe, which is the center of the Olympic Movement. The

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 75-76.

³⁶⁶ Ch. La Roche to Otto Mayer, 27 December 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

³⁶⁷ Otto Mayer to Ch. La Roche, n.d., Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1956.

³⁶⁸ Otto Mayer to W.S. Kent Hughes, 18 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1956-59).

only thing wrong is, the President is on the other side of the Atlantic.”³⁶⁹ Mayer sent a letter to Sir William Bridgeford, the chief executive officer of the Melbourne Games organizing committee, saying that, “If I don’t get apologies from the Australian O.C. on its interference in my private life, it shall hear further from me. AFTER ALL WHAT I HAVE DONE DAYS AND NIGHTS DURING 3 WEEKS to make the Games a success as regard to the participation of those who intended to withdraw.”³⁷⁰ He followed with a statement to be distributed to members of the Australian N.O.C. that announced his intention to remain in Lausanne as the I.O.C. Chancellor.

Following the confirmation of each of the countries abstaining from participating at Melbourne, a “long discussion” was held at the I.O.C. General Session to figure out how to discipline the reprobate delegations. The first idea was to “severely censure, and perhaps even withdraw recognition from the NOC’s which violated Olympic principals [*sic*] by withdrawing their teams,” but this action was found to be too harsh. The action taken in regard to the countries that withdrew was a mere slap on the wrist, which was composed of a single statement issued concurrently to the global media and to the offending countries:

On the eve of the opening of the Melbourne Games, the International Olympic Committee, at its first Session, learned officially from its President, Mr. Avery Brundage, that a small number of nations had withdrawn from the Games for reasons other than sport.

The International Olympic Committee, an organisation concerned solely with sport, expresses its sorrow and regret at these withdrawals, considering that they are not in keeping with the Olympic ideal.

³⁶⁹ Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer, 10 January 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 47, Folder: Mayer, Otto (Chancellor), Jan. to Dec. 1957.

³⁷⁰ Otto Mayer to W.S. Kent Hughes, 18 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1956-59).

This action was taken unanimously.³⁷¹

And that was that. No individual sanctions were introduced and each abstaining country was reinstated to participate in the 1960 Summer Olympic Games in Rome.³⁷² Reaching the same conclusion that scholars Scott Rosner and Deborah Low found in their study of the 1976, 1980 and 1984 Summer Olympic Games, the leadership of the I.O.C. found that the pressure the it received to ban a nation was futile unless a nation had violated the Olympic Charter.³⁷³

Due to the number of absences by I.O.C. members at the 1956 Games, a circular letter addressed to all members of the I.O.C. included a statement from Brundage:

A large number of our members were prevented from attending the session in Melbourne because of doctor's orders for reasons of health. This raises a most important subject. Within the next five or ten years at the most a major portion, perhaps as many as one-half of the membership of the IOC, will undoubtedly retire for these same reasons. To carry on the Olympic Movement we should be training a number of younger men, but this is not being done.³⁷⁴

One of the absentees of the Games, Albert Mayer of Switzerland, immediately messaged Brundage noting that it was a "mistake" to send the letter, arguing that "The principal reason was that it cost them too much money, but they did not dare to say so (I have

³⁷¹ "Special Meeting of the International Olympic Committee at Menzies Hotel on Tuesday 4th December, 1956, at 5.30 p.m.," 4 December 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 164, Folder: Games of the XVI Olympiad, Melbourne, Australia, 1956 (Organizing Committee, 1956-59).

³⁷² The only exception to this was the abstention of PRC from the 1960 Summer Olympic Games, who boycotted due to the participation of Formosa (Taiwan). Egypt participated as the United Arab Republic with Syria at the 1960 Summer Olympic Games, although nearly all the athletes competing with this team were Egyptian.

³⁷³ Rosner and Low, 27-80.

³⁷⁴ Avery Brundage Circular Letter to International Federations, National Olympic Committees, and International Olympic Committee, January 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 71, Folder: Circular Letters to IOC's, NOC's, IF's, 1955 - 1958.

investigated).”³⁷⁵ This provides a critical insight into the reasoning of not only why specific I.O.C. members were not in attendance, but also why national delegations hid behind the shroud of a boycott and did not attend due to financial reasons. If you recall from the section on Egypt, Taher initially withdrew his delegation due to financial restraints, later pulling his team at the last minute because of the situation happening in Suez.

The object of this study is to add to the existing literature on the 1956 Melbourne Summer Olympic Games and the boycott movements that preceded it. Contrary to the reasoning that the N.O.C.’s gave for each of their absences, this thesis provides a complementary³⁷⁶ explanation as to why each country abstained from attending the 1956 Summer Olympic Games in Melbourne. I argue that the abstentions were not 100-percent political in nature, but possessed an amalgamation of reasons, including financial, travel, and historical, that ultimately pushed each country to the brink of abstention. While politics played (and continues to play) a key role in national participation at the Olympic Games, other underlying factors must also be considered.

Just before the opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games in Melbourne, Brundage delivered a statement titled, “THE OLYMPIC SPIRIT CENTRAL MISSION” that underpinned the complete experience regarding the abstention of nations from the Games:

The Games are not, and must not become, a contest between nations, which would be entirely contrary to the spirit of the Olympic Movement and would surely lead to disaster. For this reason there is no official score and tables of points are without authority ... Normal national pride is perfectly legitimate, but neither the Olympic

³⁷⁵ Albert R. Mayer to Avery Brundage, 19 January 1957, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 60, Folder: Mayer, Albert, 1946-1947, 1951-1969, Switzerland.

³⁷⁶ I use the word “complementary” as opposed to “competing” because I recognize that the political reasons of each of the countries abstaining is perfectly legitimate; however, without the issue of finances and distance, we may not have seen these boycotts happen.

Games nor any other sport contest can be said to indicate the superiority of one country or of one political system over another.³⁷⁷

Politics will continue to play a key role in the Olympic Games moving forward from the 1956 Summer Olympic Games in Melbourne, and the separation of them from the Olympic movement remained a challenge for Brundage and his successors.

As Brundage has stated, time and time again, politics had no place in the Olympic arena. Hoping to relinquish the political events that categorized the World War II period of the Olympic Games, including the precursory 1936 Nazi Olympic Games in Berlin and the cancellation of both the 1940 and 1944 Summer Olympic Games, Brundage repeated this desire to keep the two ideologies separate throughout his presidential career. Against the backdrop of the early Cold War period, however, this statement would not hold its weight in following Olympic competitions, as Brundage wistfully envisioned. The Melbourne Olympic Games were not the first, nor the last, to be censured for its inability to separate political ambitions from the events on the field of play.

³⁷⁷ Speech, Avery Brundage, "THE OLYMPIC SPIRIT CENTRAL MISSION, MELBOURNE," 18 November 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Box 249, Folder: Games of the 16th Olympiad, Melbourne - 1956 – A.B. Speeches.

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