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**Reaching the Finnish Line: The 1952 Helsinki Olympics and Finland's Commitment to the
Olympic Spirit**

BY

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GLOBAL STUDIES HONORS PROGRAM
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Abstract

The Olympics have been used by nations to project statehood, national pride, and unity, but they have also served as a means of demonstrating political dominance. At the beginning of the Cold War, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) wavered in its commitment to the apolitical Olympic Movement; inconsistent and politically motivated decision-making reflected broader geopolitical contentions. Helsinki, Finland, was the stage of the 1952 Helsinki Summer Olympics. Finland welcomed the world that had just been at war, committed atrocities, and was actively in a Cold War, to a peaceful and inclusive Olympics. Despite the IOC's efforts to derail the apolitical ethos of the Olympic Movement, Finland and its commitment to neutrality by way of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen Line and the Olympic Spirit, protected the sanctity of the Games as highly political nations prepared to debut or re-enter in Helsinki. Through analyzing archival news, correspondence, and media from the IOC, National Organizing Committees, and the Finnish Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games, this thesis argues that Finland was instrumental in orchestrating the unprecedented neutrality and success of the 1952 Helsinki Summer Olympics. This thesis attempts to explain how Finland's commitment to the Olympic Spirit triumphed in spite of the IOC's decision-making.

Acknowledgements

The first question I receive after someone kindly reads this thesis is, “Grace, how did you come up with such an insanely niche idea?” My answer usually draws on my Finnish heritage, my obsession with watching the Olympic Games, a backpacking trip in Finland, a Finnish Culture and History course, or excess time I spent reading about the 1952 Helsinki Olympics last summer. While all of these are true, this thesis ultimately came to fruition because of the supportive people in my life who have encouraged me to pursue all my academic interests.

To my family, Sinon, Kimberly, and Nora Talty, thank you for always supporting my interests and having unwavering confidence in me. To my dad, thank you for reading this thesis from its earliest, roughest drafts and for accompanying me to Lausanne, Switzerland on my research trip. Everywhere you go, fun follows, and I’ll never forget our one-room hostel, the quirky, efficient fondue restaurant, or your continued encouragement throughout the trip.

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high school, commit to UC Berkeley to study humanities, and ultimately complete this honors thesis while preparing to pursue a PhD. I don't know if either of us thought my current trajectory was possible, but it is his mind that drives my ambition. I know he is overjoyed that I am not pursuing a career in politics.

Acronyms

Countries

FRG: Federal Republic of Germany

GDR: German Democratic Republic

PRC: People's Republic of China

ROC: Republic of China

USA/US: United States (of America)

USSR: Soviet Union

Olympic Acronyms

EC: Executive Committee

IF: International Federation

IOC: International Olympic Committee (COI in French)

NOC: National Olympic Committee

OC: Olympic Charter

OCOG: Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games

POC: Palestine Olympic Committee (NOC of Palestine)

Sports Organizations

AAU: Amateur Athletic Federation

ACSF: All-China Sports Federation

CNAFF: China National Amateur Athletic Federation

FIFA: Fédération Internationale de Football Association

IAAF: International Amateur Athletic Federation

NSRL: Nationalsozialistischer Reichsbund für Leibesübungen (National Socialist League of the Reich for Physical Exercise)

NYAC: New York Athletic Club

PFF: Palestine Football Federation

SUL: Finland Athletic Federation

Acronyms for Finno-Soviet Treaty of 1948

YYA Treaty: Ystävyyss-, yhteistyö- ja avunantosopimus

FCMA: Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance

Political Parties/Entities

CCP: Chinese Communist Party

SKDL: Finnish People's Democratic League

SKP: Communist Party of Finland

Introduction

The modern Olympic Games, revived in 1896 under Pierre de Coubertin's vision of international unity through sport, have long professed to embody the values of friendship, respect, and excellence. Yet, from their inception, the Olympics have been deeply entangled with political motives and global power dynamics, often serving as an instrument of international influence and diplomacy. The 1952 Helsinki Summer Olympics, in the background of the Cold War, became a stage to reveal the contradictions of the "Olympic Ideal."¹ As the Soviet Union (USSR) and Israel made their Olympic debuts, and as two Germanies and two Chinas competed for recognition, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) faced a crisis of both its own regulation and professed neutrality. Amid heightened ideological polarization and evident IOC hypocrisy, Finland's commitment to neutrality and its invocation of the Ancient Olympic Truce, *Ekekheiria*, distinguished the 1952 Helsinki Games as a symbolic return to the Olympic Ideal.

The majority of the research on the 1952 Helsinki Games is concentrated on the Cold War activity and media between the United States (US) and the USSR. There is research on the two Germanies, and less extensively, the two Chinas. There remains a gaping hole in the research surrounding Finland's role in the 1952 Summer Olympics. Much of the research presents the competition between the US and USSR delegations and presents Finland as a passive battleground for the Cold War in the summer of 1952. Finland's complicated and recent history with the USSR and Germany, which debuted and re-entered at these Olympics, is overlooked. Finland's commitment to neutrality and the Olympic Spirit, embodied in the Paasikivi-Kekkonen Line, was underscored by the Olympic Truce that endured throughout the Games and contributed to the international praise Finland received afterward. Following 1952, Finland became a

¹ For the duration of this thesis, the Olympic Truce, Olympic Spirit, Olympic Movement, and Olympic Ideal will be capitalized to emphasize their centrality to this thesis and their role within the Olympic Movement.

prominent location for diplomatic negotiations and Sessions, notably the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) summit that produced the Helsinki Accords in 1975. Amid Cold War tensions, controversial IOC decisions and disputes with Soviet satellites, and lingering postwar conditions and reparations, few nations could have matched the neutrality and commitment to the Olympic Ideal that Finland achieved.

Chapter I: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review examines how the IOC's political inconsistencies and Finland's strategic diplomacy intersected at the 1952 Helsinki Summer Olympics,² transforming the Games into both a magnifying glass of Cold War tension and a testament to the fragile persistence of Olympic idealism. It provides a synopsis of Finland's Olympic history and its relations with notable debuting and re-entering nations, while analyzing how the IOC's apolitical façade was contradicted by Cold War realities. The literature review begins by outlining the Olympic Movement and its institutions, drawing a distinction between what appears in print and what is articulated or enacted by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Then, there is a transition to Finland's Olympic history and Finland's foreign policy leading up to 1952. Following this, there is an overview of Finno-Soviet and Finnish-German relations, establishing the context for Finland's balancing act between the two powers. Then, there is an analysis of the two Germany's dispute, Saarland's role in the Olympics, the two China's dispute, and then finally the debut of Israel and the question of Palestinian participation. The historical context establishes a foundation to explore how the Olympic Spirit and the Paasikivi-Kekkonen Doctrine underscored Finnish neutrality during the Games. This literature review delves into the current scholarship wherein there remains a gap concerning Finland's active role in shaping the Helsinki Olympics—not merely as a passive host caught between Cold War contentions, but as a thoughtful and strategic player in the success of the 1952 Helsinki Olympics. Finland

² There are various Olympic naming conventions including "Helsinki Games," "Summer Olympics," "Helsinki Olympics," and the "XV Olympiad in Helsinki 1952." When the 1952 Olympics are described in this prospectus, it is referring to the 1952 Helsinki Summer Olympic Games, not the 1952 Oslo Winter Olympic Games.

deliberately crafted the Olympics to embody the Olympic Ideal despite the IOC's attempts to derail its ethos.

Helsinki Olympics as a Case Study

Emerging from the 1940s burdened by wartime casualties, debt, and a twelve-year interruption in Olympic planning, Finland sought to reassert itself on the world stage as a neutral nation. The 1952 Helsinki Olympics became a reflection of broader global tensions including residual tensions from World War II, the beginning of the Cold War, and IOC contention and inconsistency during a fragile political moment.

Germany and the USSR left the 1940s having just fought the bloodiest war in human history, World War II, fighting each other on the Eastern Front, namely the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945). The USSR emerged victorious with approximately 27 million Soviets dead. Finland entered the 1950s in a complicated position in geopolitics, having cooperated with Germany during Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion of the USSR, and the Winter War and Continuation War against the USSR. Historically connected to both powers, once part of the Russian Empire and geographically bordering the USSR, Finland in 1952 found itself caught between two superpowers while simultaneously pursuing neutrality amidst internal disputes and residual effects of domestic wars.

German inclusion in the Helsinki Olympics was accompanied by the debut of Israel, which was established in 1948. Additionally, the remnants of the Chinese Civil War spilled onto the Olympic stage. Finland delicately balanced inclusion and neutrality, aligned to the Olympic ethos unlike the IOC. "Sporting geography" was curiously applied to Saarland, the principle of

amateurism was challenged by the Soviet delegation, separation between state and National Olympic Committee (NOC) was complicated, and the Olympic regulation of only one delegation per nation was applied inconsistently. The IOC's professed apolitical nature was deeply entangled with geopolitical tensions, making the 1952 Helsinki Olympics and Finnish involvement a unique case study for examining IOC decision-making, the early Cold War, and Finland's attempts to define its post-war neutrality.

Olympic Revival

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Olympic Movement promote peaceful competition through sport. The three fundamental values of Olympism are friendship, respect, and excellence, which create a peaceful environment for nations to come together and witness athletes engaging in fair competition. The Olympic Ideal or Olympic Spirit underpin the sanctity of the Olympic Games and are at the heart of the Olympic Movement. However, the IOC has contradicted and ignored the Olympic Ideal since its establishment in 1894. Pierre de Coubertin, a French educator, created the IOC and revived the Olympics, which hadn't taken place since 393 AD in Ancient Greece, with the first modern Olympic Games held in 1896 in Athens, Greece. Coubertin was motivated to revive the Games because he believed France's military loss to Prussia was attributed to the Prussians' commitment to physical education. Additionally, during Coubertin's travels, he wrote "*L'Éducation en Angleterre*" (1888), wherein he described how the athletic landscape and physical education of England would influence the outcome of wars. The motto, "Rebronzer la France!" became the backbone of French organizations developing new physical education models. The foundation of the modern Olympics was underscored by political motivations, Coubertin's dedication to developing French athletic superiority, and it has continued to be a magnifier of world politics.

Although the Olympic Ideal is pure in print, nations use the Olympics to promote national self-interest and to assert political dominance. Historically, newer nations have sought Olympic recognition to garner global recognition and foster national unity and pride. Sports derive from a place of neutrality; however, every sporting event at the Olympics separates winners and losers, creating an opportunity for nations to use Olympic performances to prove their nation's athletic dominance on the world stage.

The IOC is the overseeing body of Olympic Conduct, governed by the IOC President and Executive Committee (EC), all of whom sit on the Executive Board. The rules and bylaws of the IOC and "Olympism" are outlined in the Olympic Charter (OC). The IOC oversees International Federations (IFs), National Olympic Committees (NOCs), and the Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (OCOG). The IFs, NOCs, and the IOC are brought together by the Olympic Congress. In print, all bodies are autonomous, private, and free of government influence. In the wake of the Cold War, political ambitions dominated these Olympic bodies.

The 1952 Helsinki Olympics became a Cold War battleground that exposed the hypocrisy of the IOC and challenged the notion of the Games as an apolitical arena for amateur sport. The USSR debut prompted several IOC members to voice open disdain for the participation of a communist state. The Soviet Olympic Committee was state-funded and government-controlled, with direct oversight of athlete training. In addition to the USSR, the Eastern Bloc satellite states and the People's Republic of China (PRC) competed with Soviet oversight. Seeking to use the Games for Cold War propaganda, the USSR encouraged the formation of NOCs in East Germany (GDR) and the PRC to expand communist representation in Helsinki. However, these new committees violated the IOC's own rule: allowing only one Olympic team to compete per

country. By permitting their inclusion, the IOC undermined its own regulations and apolitical principles.

Sporting Geography

In 1911, Pierre de Coubertin, the creator of the modern Olympics, stated that,

“The fundamental rule of the modern Olympics is contained in two lines: all games, all nations and it is not even in the power of the International Olympic Committee, which is the highest authority in the matter, to do anything to change this. I would add that a nation is not necessarily an independent State and a sporting geography exists that may differ, at times, from the political geography.”³

Coubertin’s “all games, all nations” doctrine professes that “sports practiced by different cultures prevail over national boundaries.”⁴ For example, Finland has competed in the Olympics since 1908, even though it was under Russian rule until 1917, and Bohemia competed under Austrian rule until Czechoslovak independence in 1918. In 1948, Puerto Rico debuted, although politically, it's a territory of the United States. In the context of the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, Saarland participated in the Olympics under the criteria of “sporting geography,” even though it was a territory of France. Attributing to the fact that there are no definitive rules around which territories fulfill the criteria of an NOC, the IOC has acted inconsistently when applying “sporting geography.”

For a state to be internationally recognized, it must have a determined territory with a fixed population and the ability to interact with other states. According to Francis A. Boyle, who studies Palestinian claims for statehood, “concluded that these criteria are met, despite the special circumstances of Palestinian history, and that the United Nations Charter article 80 and

³ Da Costa, Lamartine. *Olympic Studies: Current Intellectual Crossroads*. (Universidade Gama Filho, 2002), 203-204.

⁴ Da Costa, *Olympic Studies*, 92.

League Covenant article 22 (section 4) substantiate this.”⁵ Following the historical precedent of “sporting geography” and Palestinian history, Palestine would be granted IOC recognition.

However, Palestine’s Olympic debut was in 1996. Cases like Palestine lead Olympic historians to “presuppose that there has been a duality in terms of the IOC political maneuvers while treating different cultures and geographical spaces in worldwide perspectives.”⁶ The undefined nature of “sporting geography” enables the IOC to judge territories on a case-by-case basis, rather than through fixed regulation.

Olympic Truce

Given the Cold War contention leading up to the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, Finland’s Organizing Committee declared *Ekekheiria*, the ancient Greek Olympic truce, to honor the spirit of the Games. On July 10, 1952, Finnish Organizing Committee President Baron von Frenckell proclaimed *Ekekheiria* during a speech to preserve the political immunity of the Olympic Games, offering a metaphorical olive branch that would endure throughout the competitions. Finland’s neutral intentions are expressed through the proclamation of the Olympic Truce; despite Finland’s complex histories with many of the debuting and re-entering countries, its commitment to neutrality was paramount. The 1952 Helsinki Olympics marked the debut of the USSR into competition, the re-entry of Japan and Germany following World War II, and the debuts of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Israel. Finland’s commitment to neutrality enabled peaceful competition during the Games, despite the Cold War narrative and IOC inconsistency.

⁵ Issam Khalidi and Alon K. Raab, “Palestine and the Olympics – A History.” (*The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 2017), 1406.

⁶ Da Costa, *Olympic Studies*, 92.

Finland & The Olympics

Finland's Olympic debut was as an autonomous duchy of the Russian Empire in 1908 under the concept of "sporting geography." Finland marched without a flag in protest of being under Russian rule and continued to win five Olympic medals. The Grand Duchy of Finland competed in the Olympics from 1908 to 1917 without national independence; even with a small population, Finnish athletes were incredibly successful at the Olympics. Notably, the Finns won 28 medals and took fifth place out of twenty participating countries at the 1912 Stockholm Olympics, surpassing the Russian team that earned 26 medals. From 1908 to 1936, Finland won the fourth most medals during the Summer Olympic Games, which is astounding considering Finland's limited population. Finland's Olympic success is attributed to dominant long-distance runners who came to be known as the "Flying Finns." Hannes Kolehmainen won 3 Olympic gold medals in 1912, and Paavo Nurmi won 9 gold medals and 3 silver medals during the 1920, 1924, and 1928 Olympics.⁷ Finland became independent in 1917, and Olympic success enabled Finland to enhance its global visibility and recognition. The popular phrase "Finland ran itself onto the world's map" circulated following decisive victories of the "Flying Finns".⁸

Finnish IOC member Erik von Frenckell initially presented the possibility of Finland hosting the Olympics in 1915, before Finnish independence. Following the success of the "Flying Finns," Finland bid to host the 1936 Olympics, which went to Berlin. Finland won the bid to host the 1940 Olympics in 1938 after Japan forfeited the bid, but the 1940 Olympics were cancelled due to the outbreak of World War II.

The 1940 Olympics were cancelled six months after the USSR invaded Finland, leaving Finland's newly built 70,000-seat stadium unoccupied. According to the 1940 United States

⁷ Refer to the section, "A Final Anecdote: Paavo Nurmi" for more information on Nurmi.

⁸ Jason Edward Lavery, *The History of Finland* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2006), 103.

Olympic Committee Report, “The Finns were so enthusiastic and the Organizing Committee so diligent that in the summer of 1939 when I visited Helsinki, most of the necessary arrangements were nearly complete.”⁹ *The New York Times* reported that “Russia began her rape of Finland and nothing kills sporting instincts more violently than war, which is man’s most unsportsmanlike activity”¹⁰ During the 12-year planning gap, from 1940 to 1952, Finland fought multiple domestic wars. However, Olympic preparations, in terms of urban planning and construction, remained relatively uninterrupted for twelve years.¹¹ Finland used the Olympics as a diplomatic tool since its debut in 1908 and was committed to hosting the Olympics despite being devastated by war. In the smallest city ever to host the Summer Olympics, the “Flying Finns” ran into Finland’s once-vacant Olympic Stadium to open the 1952 Helsinki Games.

Finnish Foreign Policy

With the onset of the Cold War, Finland prioritized upholding neutral, friendly relations with the USSR. Maintaining a positive relationship with the USSR, considering Finland’s historical and geopolitical ties and their shared border, necessitated a degree of separation from Western Europe. In November of 1944, a new Finnish cabinet was established under J.K. Paasikivi, who had served as Finland’s Chief Ambassador to the USSR from 1939 up until this point. Paasikivi served as the President of Finland from 1946 until 1956. Paasikivi’s domestic and foreign policies were created under the premise of accommodating Soviet power to maintain national independence. Finnish Cold War foreign relations with the USSR came to be known as the Paasikivi-Kekkonen Line, which was guided by “a strong survival instinct devoid of any

⁹ Frederick W. Rubien and Avery Brundage, *Report of the American Olympic Committee 1940 for the Games of the XIIIth Olympiad* (American Olympic Committee, 1940), 16.

¹⁰ John Kieran and Arthur Daley, *The New York Times*, 1939, quoted in John Lucas, “Avery Brundage and His Vision for the Olympic Games during the ‘Unsettling’ Years 1939–1952,” (*Journal of Olympic History*, 2008), 23.

¹¹ Kristo Vesikansa and Laura Berger, “The Olympic Gap: Planning and Politics of the Helsinki Olympics,” *Planning Perspectives* 39, no. 3 (2024): 501–530, 510.

ideological excesses” and dictated “the geopolitical reality of Soviet-Russia would come before anything else and could override, at least in theory, any longstanding anti-Russia feeling”.¹²

Paasikivi’s commitment to accommodating the USSR prioritized flexibility over legality, and his efforts to promote cordial Finno-Soviet relations were largely unpopular and concerning to the West, particularly the United States. There was a fine line between “cordial” and “excessively friendly relations” with the USSR, a delicate balance which President Paasikivi attempted to navigate.¹³

Paasikivi’s commitment to flexible Soviet neutrality is highlighted through the Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance (FCMA) of 1948, commonly known as the Ystävyys, Yhteistyö & Avunanto (YYA Treaty) to Finns, between Finland and the USSR. Finland pledged to defend itself against any attack on Finland or on the USSR through Finland. FCMA recognized Finland’s desire to be left out of the Great Powers’ conflicts and Finland’s inability to join European agreements or treaties.

The Paasikivi-Kekkonen line began under Paasikivi and evolved under the following President, Urho Kekkonen, who served as Finland’s Prime Minister under Paasikivi. Kekkonen worked in politics for over three decades and led Finland's Athletic Federation (SUL) from 1926 to 1947. His presidency was tied to “Finlandization,” a term that became taboo in Finland, describing a small country's servile policies and actions towards its larger, more powerful neighbor. Finns described the term “Finlandization,” which was popularized outside of Finland, as offensive and inaccurate.¹⁴ Kekkonen’s relations with the USSR were deemed as “excessively

¹² Jussi M. Hanhimäki, *Containing Coexistence: America, Russia, and the ‘Finnish Solution’* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1997). 108.

¹³ Hanhimäki, *Containing Coexistence*, 85.

¹⁴ The term “Finlandization” was popularized in the context of the onset of the Russo-Ukrainian War in February of 2022.

friendly,” unlike Paasikivi, who prioritized “cordial” relations. “Finlandization” evolved out of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen Line, which shaped flexible foreign relations with the USSR.

The Paasikivi-Kekkonen Line was part of Finland’s commitment to remaining a neutral nation during the Cold War. In 1939, by way of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Finland was positioned within the Soviet sphere of influence, rather than the German sphere. Finland desperately wanted to separate itself from the Soviet sphere and show the world that Finland was an independent, neutral nation. Alfred Noble, a member of the 1952 British delegation, said the Olympic Games allowed Finns “to dispel the all too-prevalent illusion that Finland is somehow behind the Iron Curtain.”¹⁵ The Finns believed hosting a successful and neutral Olympics would enable Finland to enhance its neutral global image. Kekkonen described Helsinki as a “neutral meeting place” for the Olympics.¹⁶ Finnish foreign policy facilitated an inclusive, accommodating Olympic Games between countries that had recently fought in World War II and were actively engaging in the Cold War.

USSR and Finland

The majority of research covering the 1952 Helsinki Olympics solely focuses on the Cold War playing out between the United States (US) and the USSR. Quoting George Orwell, Helsinki is presented as “a sea of tranquility,” while an intense “war without bullets,” between the Soviet and American athletes was endured.¹⁷ In 1952, Harrison E. Salisbury, a writer for *The New York Times*, described how Soviet athletes had a mission to “provide a shining example of

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ David Miller, *The Official History of the Olympic Games and the IOC: Athens to London, 1894–2012* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2012), 136.

the superiority of Soviet culture over that of bourgeois countries”¹⁸ The USSR declined all prior invitations to international athletic competitions because of ideological differences.

The 1952 Helsinki Olympics created a new arena to compete against Americans for Cold War glory. The USSR accepted the Olympic invitation and created intense training camps where state-sponsored athletes would incorporate Western training methods and employ performance-enhancing drugs to ensure the USSR would leave the 1952 Helsinki Olympics with more medals. The IOC felt that the USSR did “not at all understand” the premise of amateurism as Soviet athletes were receiving large cash prizes for setting world records in sports.¹⁹ Avery Brundage warned that “the whole structure of amateur sport and the Olympic Games which we have labored so many years to create will be wrecked and ruined.”²⁰ The Soviet athletes that received cash prizes in the 1940s were allowed to compete in Helsinki, to Brundage’s dismay. Hosting the 1952 Helsinki Olympics in Finland allowed the USSR to exert influence over the Finnish Organizing Committee. Finland’s professed neutrality halted when Soviet aggression began, which enabled the Soviets to manipulate the Finnish Organizing Committee to create an Olympics suitable for the Soviets. For example, Joseph Stalin refused to send athletes to stay in Helsinki if they were to be housed with Western athletes. Stalin resisted the idea of Soviet athletes sharing accommodations with Western teams and even proposed daily boat transport from Leningrad (present-day St. Petersburg) to Helsinki. As a result, Finland constructed a separate Olympic Village in Otaniemi for the USSR and its satellite states.

¹⁸ Harrison E. Salisbury, “Pep Talk by Soviet Press Urge Red Athletes to Annex Crowns,” (*The New York Times*, July 20, 1952).

¹⁹ Allen Guttman, *The Games Must Go On: Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 137.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

Finnish Communism and Russophobia

Finland's extensive relations with Germany from 1915 to 1945 developed from its growing Russophobia. Finland was under Russian rule for 108 years, many of which were incredibly beneficial for Finns. In 1809, under Alexander I, Finland retained legal autonomy, its "constitution," the Lutheran religion, and various other privileges seen nowhere else in the Russian Empire.²¹ Many Finns supported early Russian rule because "the new regime gave Finland a separate identity and gave its elite new opportunities."²² Helsinki, Finland's capital city was created and Finns were encouraged to develop their own national identity. By 1903, under Nicholas II, Finland was merely a "front line in the defense of the Russian capital;" Finland was placed under martial law, Finns could be drafted anywhere in the Russian Empire, and Russian was widely integrated.²³ This new era of oppression awakened a Finnish Golden Age in culture which furthered national ambitions until Finland gained independence in 1917. Mixed emotions about the Russian Empire were complicated by multiple domestic wars against the USSR, where Germany became Finland's only avenue to offset Soviet influence. For example, during Finland's Winter War against the USSR (1939-1940), after asking for assistance from Western Europe, British and French soldiers were denied passage to Finland through Scandinavia because of Norwegian and Swedish neutrality policies and fears of German and Soviet aggression. The USSR was against Finnish-German relations, assigning Finland to its sphere of influence through the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939 and explicitly noting Germany in the FCMA Agreement as a country not to pursue relations with.

²¹ By 1890, Finland was the only place in the Russian Empire with its local administration and constitution in use.

²² Lavery, *The History of Finland*, 54.

²³ Lavery, *The History of Finland*, 73.

Going into the Cold War, Finland was in a complicated position being pulled between German and Soviet influence, two superpowers who had just fought against each other on the Eastern Front of World War II (1939-1945), known as the Great Patriotic War. Over 30 million people died on the Eastern Front and the Soviet Union emerged victorious from the war, following Nazi Germany's surrender in Berlin in 1945. The USSR's sole influence over Finland was cemented following World War II. However, many Finns were committed to Soviet communism. The Communist Party of Finland (SKP) amassed power in the 1950s after being banned in Finland until 1944. Kekkonen brought the Finnish Communists into the government to improve Finno-Soviet relations, which aggravated the West, especially the United States. Kekkonen's inclusion of Finnish Communists into the government is a clear example of how Kekkonen crossed the line between "cordial" and "excessively friendly" relations with the USSR by way of the Finnish Communists. The SKP gained prominence through its membership in the Finnish People's Democratic League (SKDL), which was financially supported by the USSR. SKDL was one of the largest leftist parties in capitalist Europe and gained notoriety as Finland was repealing anti-communist laws during the Cold War. At the Helsinki Olympics, Finnish communists rejoiced that the USSR and the PRC were represented. Finland's government attempted to prove neutrality to the world while internally, Finns were divided between being anti-USSR and pro-communism.

Germany and Finland

From 1915, Finland looked to Germany as a powerful counterweight to the USSR.²⁴ Between 1915 and 1916, nearly two thousand Finns, who would later fight in the White Army

²⁴ Lavery, *The History of Finland*, 12, 124.

during the Finnish Civil War of 1918, were secretly trained in Germany. German-trained Finns became known as the “Jääkärit,” from the German word *Jäger*, meaning “rifleman” or “infantryman.” The Jääkärit served on the Eastern Front of World War I as the 27th Royal Prussian Jäger Battalion. During the Finnish Civil War (1918), the Svinhufvud government arranged for roughly 10,000 German troops to assist the White Army. Backed by the Bolsheviks, the Finnish Red Army faced German forces that captured Helsinki, and White forces led by Carl Gustaf Emil “Marshal” Mannerheim, who defeated the Reds near Loviisa.

In 1940, Finland signed a secret memorandum with Germany to purchase German weapons in exchange for allowing German troops to pass through northern Finland into Norway.²⁵ This followed the Winter War (1939–1940), which ended with the Moscow Peace Treaty. Finland preserved its independence but lost 11% of its territory, including the Karelian Isthmus, islands in the Gulf of Finland, and the Salla region. The Finns claimed to be “defeated but not conquered”²⁶ Determined to reclaim these territories, Finland sought Nazi Germany’s support in the Continuation War (1941–1944). Throughout 1940 and 1941, Germany hinted at resolving Finland’s “Eastern Question,” which encouraged Finland to join as a “co-belligerent” in Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion of the USSR in June 1941.²⁷

By June 1944, as World War II turned against Germany, Finnish President Risto Ryti and German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop signed the Ryti–Ribbentrop Agreement. In it, Ryti pledged that Finland would stand with Germany “to the very end” and would not make peace with the USSR without German consent.²⁸ In exchange, Germany provided crucial military

²⁵ The primary benefit of this memorandum was Finland's increased loyalty and alignment to a powerful country in Western Europe.

²⁶ Rolf Torngren, “The Neutrality of Finland,” *Foreign Affairs* 39, no. 4 (1961), 601–609.

²⁷ Hanhimäki, *Containing Coexistence*, 13.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

support in the form of weapons, ammunition, and reinforcements.²⁹ However, the agreement was made only in Ryti's name and did not legally bind the Finnish government. When Marshal Mannerheim succeeded Ryti as President later that year, he argued that the commitment had been Ryti's personal promise alone, freeing Finland to act independently. In September 1944, Finland signed the Moscow Armistice with the USSR.

The Soviet victory in the Continuation War restored the 1940 borders and extended Soviet territory, increased Finnish war reparations, and required Finland to expel all German troops and cut ties with Germany. This led to the Lapland War (1944–1945), during which Finland drove German forces out of its territory. Following the Moscow Armistice, Finnish war-guilt trials (1945–46) prosecuted political leaders, including former President Ryti. Out of eight defendants, seven were found guilty and served prison sentences. The United States, however, viewed Finland as a victim rather than an ally of Nazi Germany. After World War II, as a facet of newfound neutrality, Finland refrained from recognizing either the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) or the German Democratic Republic (GDR). For the remainder of the Cold War, Finland was strictly in the Soviet sphere of influence.

Germany at the Olympics

In the early 1950s, the question of how a divided Germany would compete in the Olympic Games became a flashpoint in Cold War Olympic politics. The IOC, with US and British backing, granted provisional recognition to West Germany (FRG), allowing the FRG to compete in the 1952 Helsinki Olympics. Meanwhile, East Germany (GDR) petitioned to rejoin the Games in 1951, even though it had not yet gained full autonomy from the USSR. The

²⁹ Many of these arrangements were pre-arranged as Germany was already supporting Finland.

Socialist Unity Party founded the National Olympic Committee of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), triggering immediate controversy. The GDR announced that its goal was to “make every effort to create, in co-operation with the National Olympic Committee of the Federal Republic, a joint National Olympic Committee for all Germany,” and to “continue the struggle for unity and democratic development in German sport... and to further Olympic ideals in both German states.”³⁰ The Olympics have a history of accepting territories based on “sporting geography” rather than political borders, so granting the GDR Olympic recognition would not be unusual. However, the GDR NOC was directly controlled by the Socialist Unity Party, which conflicted with the “Olympic Ideal” of keeping the Olympics separate from politics. A “sport-political offensive” was created by East Germany, putting the FRG on the defensive, which undermined any opportunity of a unified Olympic team or apolitical cooperation leading up to the Helsinki Olympics.³¹

The IOC dismissed the GDR NOC as being a “Soviet satellite” and declared that “only one National Olympic Committee can exist in any one country.”³² Since FRG’s NOC was already recognized, it retained precedence in representing Germany. Representatives Karl Ritter von Halt (FRG) and Kurt Edel (GDR) agreed in principle that a joint German team should compete at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, with athletes selected from both East and West based on merit. The IOC stated that, “it is necessary for the West and East representatives to send a single German team... the German team shall be selected at a special try-out... irrespective of whether they are resident in East or West.”³³ However, politics prevented neutral tryouts, which were held in West

³⁰ G.A. Carr, *The Involvement of Politics in the Sporting Relationships of East and West Germany, 1945–1972*, (Journal of Sport History, 1980), 41.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, 43.

³³ Miller, *The Official History of the Olympic Games and the IOC*, 134.

Germany, from taking place. When the Games opened, only West German athletes represented Germany.³⁴

Avery Brundage and His German Fixation

During the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, Avery Brundage, United States Olympic Committee (USOC) President and IOC Vice President, was being prepared by IOC President J. Sigfrid Edström to assume the role of IOC President. He became the first non-European IOC President days after the closing ceremonies in Helsinki. Brundage was a self-made, Detroit-born millionaire who promoted the apolitical Olympic Movement and de Coubertin's philosophy.³⁵ However, during his career, he repeatedly took anti-communist and pro-German positions, straying from the apolitical ideal he vocalized. He held the role of IOC president for twenty years and was nicknamed "Slavery Bondage" for leading as a "moralistic bulldozer" that took on the roles of "godparent" and "bully".³⁶ Brundage was an "active partisan of German culture," and many believed he was a "shameless apologist for the Nazis".³⁷ Brundage was openly opposed to and blamed Jews for the 1936 Olympic boycott, which was hosted by Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany. Brundage even went to Germany prior to the cancellation of the 1940 Olympics in the "name of 'sport friendship' that transcended issues such as racism and war," according to American historian Robert Edwin Herzstein.³⁸ At a meeting of the Olympic Committee held at the New York Athletic Club (NYAC) on December 11, 1944, Brundage's remarks were met with

³⁴ The politics of the delegation sent to Helsinki can be found in the section "The German Section".

³⁵ Brundage, a known philanderer, had a Finnish mistress, Lilian Wähämäk Dresden. Dresden gave birth to two sons in 1951 and 1952. Curiously, Brundage's second wife was a German princess.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 144.

³⁷ Guttmann, *The Games Must Go On*, 151.

³⁸ John Lucas, *Avery Brundage and his Vision for the Olympic Games During the "Unsettling" Years 1939–1952*, (Journal of Olympic History, 2008), 23.

what the press described as a “deafening negative response.”³⁹ Attempting to defend himself, Brundage offered a weak clarification: “I was misquoted. All I said was that if a country is politically and commercially recognized by this Government [USA], I supposed, naturally, it will be recognized athletically as well.”⁴⁰ Brundage maintained the position that the Olympics could heal international violence, a stance that ignored German human rights violations. Not only does Brundage's stance illuminate the extent of hypocrisy within the IOC and his opinion, but also Finland's diplomatic challenge to host a neutral Olympics. At the 1950 Copenhagen IOC Session, Brundage was reportedly surprised to see “so much bitterness and hatred directed at Germany,” even though World War II ended five years before.⁴¹ Brundage's commitment to seeing an FRG delegation at the Helsinki Olympics came at the expense of distorting the Olympic Ideal he often promoted.

The Case of Saarland

According to IOC rules, only one Olympic delegation can represent a nation. However, historically, the IOC has recognized “sporting geography” and invited NOCs from territories without their independence. In the wake of the German question, the region of Saarland was able to establish an Olympic Committee and compete in its only Olympics.

After World War I, Saarland became detached from Germany as part of French reparations and was placed under the League of Nations administration. Though its population was overwhelmingly German, the Saar's economic ties leaned toward France. A 1935 plebiscite proved that the majority of people would vote for reintegration into Germany, but following

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Guttman, *The Games Must Go On*, 151.

World War II, the Saar became politically separated and closely aligned with France. The Saarland National Olympic Committee was accepted by the IOC, and as a result, Saar sent 37 athletes to Helsinki.

The recognition of Saarland as a separate Olympic delegation infuriated the FRG, which claimed to represent all Germans. The IOC issued “Olympic passports” granting Saar athletes visa-free travel to Finland, but the FRG refused to recognize these documents. This prevented Saar’s athletes from traveling through German territory, the shortest route to Helsinki. The Saarland team took chartered buses to Paris and then boarded flights to Copenhagen and Stockholm before finally arriving in Helsinki. Even uniforms became politically contentious. Initially, Saarland’s National Olympic Committee had chosen uniforms of blue jackets, grey trousers, and grey shoes, but when it was revealed before the Games that the FRG planned a nearly identical color scheme, Saar changed its design in early 1952.⁴² To set themselves apart, the Saar delegation wore beige hats, brown blazers, cream shirts with sandy-colored ties, grey trousers, and brown shoes. At the opening ceremony in Helsinki, the Saar team marched in the parade of nations directly in front of the Germans,⁴³ symbolizing their temporary recognition as a distinct entity on the world stage.

One Nation, One Team?: (Brundage vs USSR and its Satellite States)

IOC rules dictate that there can only be one team per nation, with notable exceptions of territories that fulfill a distinction in “sporting geography,” earning them IOC recognition. The question of the two Germanies became a contest between the IOC and the USSR’s influence. The

⁴² Hans Giessen, *Saarland: The “new” Olympic Nation Which Appeared Only Once*. (Journal of Olympic History, 2017), 43.

⁴³ The Saarland NOC switched from the French ‘Sarre’ to the German designation ‘Saar’ to march in front of the FRG during the Opening Ceremony.

GDR was a Soviet puppet state, and its communist ideology complicated the IOC's, particularly Brundage's, ability to act neutrally. In 1948, Brundage said, "I seriously doubt that it is possible to have friendly sports contacts with any country that adheres to the Communist system."⁴⁴

Brundage was incredibly conservative and anti-communist, which prevented him from acting without vocalizing his political beliefs on behalf of the IOC. The IOC was able to accept the presence of two Chinas, but the IOC, primarily Brundage, refused to accept the GDR's participation at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics. Allen Guttman, the author of *The Games Must Go On: Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement*, argues that Brundage's "attachment to German culture... and German friends... impelled him to stubbornly seek a single Germany in the world of sports when there were manifestly two Germanies in the domain of politics."⁴⁵ Brundage's "thinly veiled disapproval of Jewish/Communist practices" defined his commitment to the FRG's Olympic representation, at the expense of the IOC's credibility.⁴⁶ Brundage's ideological commitments prevented him from acting neutrally and employing the solution of the two Chinas question to the question of the two Germanies.

Two Chinas (PRC vs ROC)

After the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) established the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 following the Chinese Civil War (1927 – 1949), sport was framed as a tool for nationalism, health, and defense. At the All-China Sport and Physical Education Congress in October 1949, Feng Wenbin emphasized that physical education should strengthen the people in

⁴⁴ Guttman, *The Games Must Go On*, 137.

⁴⁵ Guttman, *The Games Must Go On*, 150.

⁴⁶ Miller, *The Official History of the Olympic Games and the IOC*, 134.

service of the “new economy,” “new democratic culture,” and “national defence.”⁴⁷ This vision was institutionalized through the creation of the All-China Sports Federation (ACSF) in 1950.

China’s sports development was deeply influenced by its alliance with the USSR. Following the 1950 Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance, the USSR provided military, economic, and technological aid and became a model for China’s sports system. The USSR even recommended that Chinese athletes train with the Soviets. As Gaotang Rong argued, China should follow the Soviet approach since it was “the most successful one in the world.”⁴⁸ Encouraged by this partnership, the PRC viewed international sport, particularly the Olympic Games, as an arena to demonstrate its socialist strength and to join its “socialist brothers” on the global stage.⁴⁹

When Finland invited China to the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, the PRC decided to participate, presenting the ACSF as the sole legitimate representative of all China. In a telegram to the IOC in February 1952, the ACSF asserted that “no other organizations do [represent China], including Taiwan.”⁵⁰ However, the rival claim from the Republic of China (ROC), through the China National Amateur Athletic Federation (CNAAF) NOC, the nationalist government in Taiwan, created the “Two Chinas” dispute. The United States supported ROC participation. Taiwan’s CNAAF, with encouragement from U.S. officials, sought to block the PRC, declaring they must stop the Communists “at all costs.”⁵¹ IOC President Sigfrid Edström ruled in June 1952, that neither NOC could compete at Helsinki. After the PRC and ROC

⁴⁷ Fan Hong and Lu Zhouxiang, *Representing the new China and the Sovietisation of Chinese sport (1949–1962)*, (The International Journal of the History of Sport, 2012), 3.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

protested, the IOC proposed allowing both delegations. Both governments refused; Beijing demanded Taiwan's exclusion, while Taiwan insisted it "could not compete with Communist bandits."⁵² Following the withdrawal of Taiwan, the only Chinese representative at the Olympics was the PRC, which was aligned with the USSR.

The PRC received its official invitation on July 18th, one day before the Games opened. Premier Zhou Enlai quickly formed a 41-member national team. He instructed the athletes that their mission was to raise the PRC's flag at the Olympics. The team arrived in Helsinki on July 25th, ten days after the opening ceremony, and only one athlete competed. The PRC's only Olympic competitor, Wu Chanyu, (although ethnically Chinese, was born in the Dutch East Indies and did not speak Chinese), competed for the PRC after previously competing for the Chinese National Team and receiving training from Soviet and Hungarian coaches in Budapest. Interestingly, Chanyu could have hypothetically competed for Indonesia during its Olympic debut in 1952. Chanyu's participation was celebrated by Chinese media, even though he was not from the PRC nor a Chinese speaker. The PRC won no medals, but Zhou hailed Chanyu's presence as a victory in establishing the PRC's international legitimacy. Following the Olympics, Zhou exclaimed that "It is a victory for the PRC when its flag is flying at the [Helsinki] Olympic Games. Being late was not our fault."⁵³ PRC participation demonstrates how the USSR attempted to become a model for satellite states, beyond just the Iron Bloc. Additionally, the PRC represented all of China, without the debut of Taiwan.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵³ Guoqi Xu, "China's National Representation and the Two-China Question in the Olympic Movement," (*China Perspectives*, 2008), 28.

Israel

Jüdische Turnerschaft, the first Jewish umbrella organization of sports clubs, was formed in 1903 in Ottoman Palestine. Many of the bourgeois sports clubs called themselves Maccabi, and in 1921, Jüdische Turnerschaft was reorganized into the Maccabi World Union (Maccabi Federation), the international sports federation. Workers' sports clubs were consolidated under Ha'poel, which translates to "laborer," and the Jewish Worker's Sports Association Ha'poel materialized in 1930.

In 1922, a leading member of the Maccabi Federation, Josef Yekutieli, declared his Olympic ambitions: hoping to host national championships, apply for Olympic membership, and host the Games in Jerusalem. Yekutieli's efforts to gain Olympic recognition did not materialize for many years, including not gaining International Amateur Athletic Federation (I.A.A.F.) recognition because "the federation did only represent the Jewish, but not the Arab population of Palestine."⁵⁴ The Maccabi Federation applied to the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) in 1925. The Maccabi Federation created the Palestine Football Federation (PFF) and invited the Ha'poel and Arab teams to present an inclusive image to FIFA. "The first meeting of the new football association directorate included 14 Jewish representatives (of both Maccabi and Ha'poel) and one Arab delegate, Ibrahim Nusseibeh, of the Arab Sports Club of Jerusalem."⁵⁵ The insincerity of the Maccabi Federation's inclusion is apparent because Nusseibeh never appears in the PFF association records after the first meeting.

⁵⁴ Amichai Alperovich and Robin Streppelhoff, *A Short History of (Eretz) Israel's Way into the International Olympic Movement*. (Stadion; International Journal of the History of Sport, 2022), 178.

⁵⁵ Khalidi and Raab, *Palestine and the Olympics*, 1405.

Yekutieli organized the first “Jewish Olympics” in Tel Aviv, Mandatory Palestine, in 1932, called the Maccabiah, which was open exclusively to Jewish athletes globally to promote their athleticism and unite their athletes. Maccabiah's success led to the creation of Palestine's NOC (POC), which was not recognized due to the same issue as the I.A.A.F. stated that the POC did not, “represent the entire population of Palestine.”⁵⁶ The Jewish Maccabi Sports Association applied to join the IOC in 1934, but was denied because of its exclusion. Baron Abedare, a British IOC member, stated that,

“In the present form it [the Olympic Association of Palestine] represented only the Maccabi organization and is not fully representative of all communities and sports, which is not in accordance with our Rules. You will judge yourself if something more precise has to be said. It seems to me that if they obey our suggestions and if they enlarge their Association by taking with them the other Jews, the Moslems and Christians; nothing will prevent them to take part as a separate country.”⁵⁷

Yekutieli, now secretary of the POC, invited Ali al-Mustaqim, a Muslim-Arab businessman born in Jaffa, to serve as Vice President of the POC and nominated Christian officials. The IOC recognized the POC in 1934, but the POC did not compete in 1936.

The POC declined an invitation to compete at the Berlin Olympics in 1936, stating that the POC was in the “very early stage of organizing and training ourselves for participation in future Olympiads...”,⁵⁸ despite athletes from the British Mandate of Palestine competing in the 1934 Western Asiatic Games. Yekutieli stated that the POC did not participate in the 1936 Olympics because of, “the prevalent spirit in Nazi Germany, which provides for racial differences between peoples, with particular expression towards the old and noble Jewish Nation,

⁵⁶ Alperovich and Streppelhoff, *A Short History of (Eretz) Israel's Way*, 179.

⁵⁷ Khalidi and Raab, *Palestine and the Olympics*, 1405.

⁵⁸ Alperovich and Streppelhoff, *A Short History of (Eretz) Israel's Way*, 181.

which differences are in absolute and strict contradiction to the spirit of modern sportsmanship.”⁵⁹

In 1948, before the London Olympics, the aftermath of World War II and criticism from the I.A.A.F. excluding Arab athletes were further complicated by Britain’s refusal to recognize the state of Israel, which resulted in Israeli athletes being denied travel visas. The British Foreign Office decided that “as the state of Palestine does not exist anymore, you have no right to participate.”⁶⁰ Additionally, the POC was created in Mandatory Palestine, which no longer existed as of May 14, 1948, the date Israel was established, so the POC no longer existed. The I.A.A.F. stated that, “the State of Palestine no longer existed, it was decided that the Member should be advised they cannot now be considered Member of the I.A.A.F.”⁶¹ Additionally, Arab countries, most notably Egypt, threatened to withdraw from the 1948 Games because the “Zionist flag” was going to be flown which would “imply partial recognition of the Jewish state” according to Egypt’s Olympic Committee.⁶²

In the early days of statehood, Israel focused its attention on gaining IOC recognition. However, Israel ran into the same issues it had previously with I.A.A.F. and POC recognition. The IOC required the NOC of Israel to “guarantee that ‘ALL athletes without distinction of religion or race leaving [living] in your country will be admitted by the national federations of Israel and also recognized by your authority.’”⁶³ The promising Israel NOC had support from the president of the German Sports Confederation and IOC member, Willi Daume, who lobbied for Israel’s Olympic recognition. Jerzy Loth, a Polish IOC member, convinced the IOC in Session to

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ “Israel’s First Olympic Appearance,” *Jewish Virtual Library*, accessed October 17, 2025,

⁶¹ Alperovich and Streppelhoff, *A Short History of (Eretz) Israel’s Way*, 184.

⁶² Steve Feldman, “Team Israel, ‘52: The State was New, the Athletes were Hopeful; A Runner on Israel’s First Olympic Squad Looks Back.” (*Jewish Exponent*, Jul 25, 1996).

⁶³ Alperovich and Streppelhoff, *A Short History of (Eretz) Israel’s Way*, 185.

recognize Israel. Israel is a unique case during the Cold War when Germans and Poles⁶⁴ agreed to rally around the same NOC. Polish and German solidarity with the POC can be attributed to the newfound support of Israel following the Holocaust. Israel had curious connections to the USSR before 1950; the Soviet Union liberated concentration camps on the way to Berlin in 1944 and 1945, was incredibly vocal about the Partition of Palestine in 1947, supplied aid to Israelis during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, and was the first country to recognize Israel. However, Israel aligned itself with the United States over the USSR and the USSR engaged in antisemitic policies during the 1950s and 1960s. The Israel NOC was recognized after the Ha'poel and the Maccabi came together to send in a joint application in 1951.

The Olympic Committee of Israel was elated to be competing at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, which created an opportunity to promote Israeli statehood and Jewish athleticism. Only Jewish athletes competed, in line with the POC's former struggles to be inclusive of the entire state's population. The state requested that all athletes use Hebrew surnames and guided athletes on how to act in Finland. For example, athletes were instructed to "wear a hat in an ultra-Orthodox home, ceremony, or synagogue, even if they had never done so before."⁶⁵ After a tireless struggle to gain Olympic status, the state of Israel put considerable weight on Olympic performance.

There were varying responses to Israel's Olympic debut. Egypt's men's basketball team threatened to boycott "if their team were forced to play Israel's in basketball" in Helsinki, echoing Egypt's previous intention to boycott in 1948.⁶⁶ However, many other delegations with Jewish athletes celebrated the debut. According to Arie Gluck, a track runner for the 1952 Israeli

⁶⁴ The Polish People's Republic was a Soviet satellite state from 1952 to 1989.

⁶⁵ Ofer Aderet, "Olympics: Revisiting the 'Crime of Helsinki,'" (Haaretz, July 13, 2012).

⁶⁶ Feldman, "Team Israel, '52," 1996.

delegation, “raising of the Israeli flag in the Olympic Village... was a real exciting moment. Jews from every other team came to watch and they stood and cried. We didn't understand why.”⁶⁷ Finland prioritized neutral accommodation and was not an influential actor in Israel's ability to debut. However, Israeli athletes and newspapers praised Helsinki extensively for organizing an incredibly welcoming environment for Israel's first Olympic Games.

A scandal known as the “crime of Helsinki” rocked Israel in 1952 when the Israeli delegation returned to Israel empty-handed.⁶⁸ The Committee for the Examination of the Israel Delegation's Appearance in the 15th Olympiad was established by the state, at the request of Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, to investigate the performance of Israeli athletes and whether their shortcomings reflected Israeli officials' poor performance. The committee concluded that the delegation performed satisfactorily, considering it was a debut performance, and increased the state's investments in sports education and training.

Palestinians on the POC and Olympic Committee of Israel

Abu al-Jibin, *al-Difa*, sports columnist, raised the question in 1948 of “Who are the members of this committee? Do the Arabs take part in it, or the Jews only? Who will represent Palestine in these international games in which the Arabs have the right to participate because they make up the majority of the population?”⁶⁹ The POC desperately avoided including Arabs and Christians in its activities and organization; it was only pressure from the I.A.A.F. and IOC that convinced the POC to add token Arab and Christian representation. Unsurprisingly, the 1952 Israeli delegation consisted of only Jews. Yekutieli and other Maccabi Federation representatives valued the investment in sports as a vehicle to “promote Zionist ideals, celebrate Jewish

⁶⁷ Feldman, “Team Israel, '52,” 1996.

⁶⁸ Aderet, “Olympics,” 2012.

⁶⁹ Khalidi and Raab, *Palestine and the Olympics*, 1409.

resilience, encourage immigration to Palestine, and express aspirations for political independence during the British Mandate.”⁷⁰ The first Palestinian sports organization, the Arab Palestine Sports Federation, was established in 1944. The Arab Palestine Sports Federation was able to create some resistance to Jewish bodies attempting to represent the entire territory of Mandatory Palestine. However, the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, known as “Nakba,” to Palestinians, meaning “catastrophe” in Arabic, expelled roughly 750,000 Palestinians, derailing the progress of sports institutions. Palestinians were able to compete in the Pan-Arab Games in 1953 with the rise of Pan-Arab solidarity.

Conclusion

In principle, the IOC is dedicated to creating an apolitical and peaceful arena for the Olympics, but in the case of the 1952 Helsinki Olympics, the IOC was inconsistent with its decision-making, which was largely politically motivated. Avery Brundage, Vice President of the IOC during the duration of the 1952 Games, used his pro-German, antisemitic, and anti-communist biases to influence the Olympic entries. Two questions dominated the 1952 Olympic IOC discourse: the debuts of two Germanies and two Chinas. These questions came into direct conflict with the IOC rule of only one Olympic delegation per country. The USSR’s satellite states in Eastern Germany (GDR) and China (PRC) created respective national committees (NOCs) and waged battles against the IOC for Olympic recognition. The IOC refused to recognize the GDR NOC because only one delegation is allowed per nation (the FRG is recognized as Germany’s NOC), but allowed both Chinese teams to compete, even though Taiwan (ROC) withdrew from the Olympics. In addition to Germany, Japan debuted after both being barred from the Olympics in 1948.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 1408.

The IOC remained inconsistent with its rulings on “sporting geography.” Countries, including Finland, competed in the Olympics before their independence because of a distinct “sporting geography” that goes beyond political borders. The French territory of predominantly ethnic Germans, Saarland, sent its first and last Olympic delegation to Helsinki. However, the FRG was prohibited from participating, and Palestine did not debut until 1996.

The most publicized debate of the 1952 Helsinki Olympics was the debut of the USSR. The USSR refused to send delegations before 1952; the last Russian delegation was under the Russian Empire in 1912. The Cold War motivated Stalin to sponsor athletes and create athletic institutions to send a superior Olympic team. By sponsoring athletes, the Soviet delegation violated an IOC regulation that only amateur athletes could compete in the Olympics. In addition, the USSR was sponsoring and assisting the GDR and PRC’s Olympic Committees to enhance communist representation. The press during the Olympics was consumed by which delegation, the USA or USSR, was winning more Olympic medals. Following the Olympics, US and Soviet journalists proclaimed Olympic victory. The USA won more medals than the USSR (76-71), but including the Iron Bloc athletes, the communist states won the most gold medals combined (47) and a Russian athlete won the most individual medals in Helsinki (4).

Finland accommodated Stalin’s order to build a separate Olympic Village for the Soviet and Eastern Bloc athletes. Politically, Finland prioritized independence, surpassing its ambition to separate itself from the USSR. Hosting the Olympics was an opportunity for Finland to enhance its global image and present itself as a neutral, accommodating nation. For example, Finland’s Armi Kuusela was crowned Miss Universe ahead of the Games and the Olympics brought Finland’s first taste of Coca-Cola. The competing nations, following the Olympics, celebrated the Finn’s ability to create a Games in line with the Olympic Ideal. Despite the IOC’s

decisions to undermine the sanctity of the Olympics, Finland acted neutrally, declared the Olympic Truce, and hosted a successful Olympics during the Cold War.

Chapter II: Methods

This thesis delves into the roles of Finland and the Paasikivi-Kekkonen Line, the Finnish OCOG and the Olympic Spirit, and the IOC in shaping the 1952 Helsinki Olympics. The methodology for this thesis is based on library research and historical analysis. This thesis examines primary sources that span from the 1940s, when Finland first attempted to host the 1940 Olympics, through the 1952 Games, and into the mid-1950s, in order to analyze the influence of the Olympics on Finnish neutrality and national character.

The sources consulted include International Olympic Committee (IOC) meeting minutes, speeches, reports, interpersonal correspondence, and other media. The key IOC figures during this period were IOC President J. Sigfrid Edström and IOC Vice President Avery Brundage, who delivered many of the addresses and made public decisions before and during the 1952 Helsinki Olympics. International Organizations (IOs), including the IOC, are widely known to receive limited scrutiny in the media they publish. However, for this thesis, I analyzed the rhetoric and motivations within IOC documents to investigate the nature of decision-making leading up to the 1952 Helsinki Olympics which was largely political.

I employed a praxiological approach to examine documents from the IOC and other IOs, reconstructing their roles through considerations of document development, production, use, and circulation. IOC documents are published in French and English, two languages I can read, and are made publicly available for consultation. In addition to IOC materials, I analyzed documents and media from National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and other sports organizations including

the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF). Examining the organization of NOCs and their efforts to send delegations to the 1952 Helsinki Olympics is essential to understanding how sporting neutrality was manipulated and undermined by geopolitics in the 1950s.

Beyond NOC documents, I drew upon speeches, documents, and media from debuting, re-entering, and returning countries that published information about their decisions to send delegations to Helsinki. This includes newspaper articles from domestic and foreign outlets such as *The New York Times*, *Pravda*, and *The Jerusalem Post*, as well as films, videos, and audio recordings from participating nations. Essential to this thesis were materials from the Finnish Organizing Committee for the Games (OCOG), Finnish organizations, and the Finnish government to address the realities of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen Doctrine and broader Finnish neutrality.

The largest collection of archival materials from the 1952 Helsinki Olympics is held at the Olympic World Library (OWL) within the IOC Olympic Studies Centre (OSC) in Lausanne, Switzerland. In January 2026, at the OSC, I consulted correspondence between IOC members and various NOCs. Many appeals to the IOC, via telegram and letter, from the PRC, ROC, GDR, and FRG became indispensable for their corresponding sections. Correspondence between IOC leadership became the greatest source of information; President Edström, Vice President Brundage, and Chancellor Otto Mayer, sent letters to each other regularly throughout the planning of the XVth Olympiad. Most of their correspondence is with each other and with Erik von Frenckell, a Finnish IOC member and the President and Chairman of the Finnish Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (OCOG). The letters shed light on the members' opinions, concerns, and dissatisfaction regarding varying Olympic debates. Their routine communication

anchors the IOC debates I allude to in later sections. Letters between the IOC and the Finnish Organizing Committee address the committee's concerns, mistakes, decisions, and successes, which are invaluable to understanding the weight of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen Line among other factors when making decisions. IOC Sessions serve as a source of formal communication within the IOC, which were held routinely in preparation for the Games. The meeting notes from the Sessions are a clear record of which IOC members supported what, including transcriptions of their speeches and their votes. The China and Germany Questions were decided during IOC Sessions following numerous Sessions of debate.

As the official Olympic languages are French and English, I was able to read the vast majority of information at the Olympic Studies Centre (OSC). I have provided my own translations for any documents written exclusively in French when quoting them. The only materials I could not read were certain Olympic books and various correspondence related to the German and Chinese National Olympic Committees (NOCs), as this material was entirely in German or Chinese. However, there isn't a severe knowledge gap because internal NOC debates were brought up to the IOC in Sessions or letters, which were communicated in English or French. A limitation of this research is that I do not speak Finnish. Finnish media without French or English translations will not be included in this project. However, many official documents produced by Finnish Olympic bodies were published in French for the IOC, so I do not anticipate a significant language or knowledge gap. Additionally, many Finnish newspapers from the 1950s do not have accessible archives.

Chapter III: Finland

IOC Makeup, Organization, & Key Figures

The XVth Olympiad in Helsinki was orchestrated by the Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (OCOG) and Executive Committee (EC) both under the leadership of Erik von Frenckell, the OCOG President and Chairman and EC Chairman. Frenckell was an IOC member and a representative of Finland at International Olympic Committee (IOC) Sessions. Kallio Kotkas was the Secretary of the Organizing Committee and Chief of the Central Bureau. Kotkas is responsible for much of the correspondence between Finland's Organizing Committee and the IOC. J.K. Paasikivi, Finland's President in 1952, was the Patron of the Games.

In 1952, the IOC leadership consisted of Sigfrid Edström, who served as IOC President from 1946 to 1952 and was the fourth IOC president, Avery Brundage, the IOC Vice President and Edström's immediate successor following the Games, and Otto Mayer, the IOC Chancellor. The decisions over Olympic debuts and re-entries were discussed and determined by IOC leadership and IOC members at IOC Sessions. Beyond meeting notes, which serve as an official record of IOC decision-making, there is confidential and official correspondence between IOC leadership, the OCOG, various National Olympic Committees (NOCs), International Federations (IFs), and National Federations (NFs) with the IOC. Letters and telegrams that illustrate the NOC and other actors' ambitions reveal how the IOC leadership judged controversies and decisions on a case by case basis rather than purely from Olympic fine print.

Helsinki as Olympic Host City

“It has been said, that the people of Finland are truly inspired with the Olympic ideals, and that the deep interest with which we follow these Games is felt even in

the smallest and most remote cottage in our deep forests. That interest has in fact been awake since the year 1906, when we first participated in the Games in Athens...”⁷¹

Welcoming Speech from von Frenckell and the OCOG, July 16, 1952

Finland was committed to the Olympic Movement and competed in multiple Olympic Games prior to its national independence in 1918. Finland initially discussed hosting the Olympics in 1915 and it wasn't until 1940, that Finland was selected to host after Japan withdrew its application. World War II upended the 1940 Olympics which left Finland with a twelve-year planning gap until it could host in 1952. The prospect of hosting the Olympics was incredibly popular with the Finnish population. The Finnish government and the City of Helsinki supported hosting ambitions; Finns helped fund the construction of the Olympic Stadium and opened their homes to tourists. As the smallest Olympic host city up until this point⁷² and as a war-torn country, the media was critical of Finland's ability to host the XVth Olympiad. Considering Finland's past with the Olympics, having been granted recognition in 1906, prior to independence, Finland was keen on inviting the entire world to Helsinki. Even though Finland had been at war with the USSR and Germany in the 1940s, Finland's OCOG under President Frenckell advocated for both delegations' inclusion in the Games.

Following the wars in Finland, President Paasikivi adopted the Paasikivi-Kekkonen Line, a survival strategy, to navigate the geopolitical reality of neighboring the USSR. Under the Paasikivi-Kekkonen Line, Finland attempted to find the delicate balance of “friendly” and “cordial” relations with the USSR, oftentimes leaning into flexible over legal relations and accommodations.⁷³ In a tourist booklet prepared by the Finnish OCOG entitled “Helsinki Capital

⁷¹ Erik von Frenckell, “Welcoming Speech from von Frenckell and the Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games,” (speech, Helsinki, Finland, July 16, 1952), Olympic Studies Centre.

⁷² Brisbane will dethrone Helsinki as the smallest Olympic host city when it hosts the 2032 Olympics.

⁷³ Hanhimäki, *Containing Coexistence*, 85.

of Finland the Olympic Host 1952,” the OCOG alluded to Finland’s geopolitical positioning that renders the Paasikivi-Kekkonen Line vital. The OCOG stated that, “the relations with Russia were good, as long as those in power understood and admitted the particular position of Finland.”⁷⁴ Finland planned the XVth Olympiad under the watchful eye of the USSR; many Soviets wielded power in Finland and there was an active communist party in Finland. Following multiple domestic wars with the USSR in the 1940s, Finland’s independence was paramount. By hosting the Olympics in Helsinki, Finland expressed its independence and belonging to the West, demonstrating to the world that it was not behind the Iron Curtain like the USSR’s other neighbors.

Erik von Frenckell and the OCOG

The Finnish OCOG had the nearly impossible task of organizing a peaceful Olympics following World War II. The losers of World War II were joining the Games and the USSR was set to make its Olympic debut in the early years of the Cold War. In a July 8, 1950, in *The New York Times* article titled “All Nations Asked to 1952 Olympics,” Frenckell was quoted as saying,

“The youth of the entire world without nationality, color, social status or political differences, will be welcome at the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki, invitations to the games would go out in June of next year to all nations, including divided Germany, Japan and those behind the Iron Curtain. West Germany and Japan already had indicated willingness to accept, East Germany hadn’t... We really do hope that the youth of the whole world without regard to differences of social status, language, religion, color or politics will be accepted. We would like to have a world peace celebration for them. We have asked the International Olympic Committee for the right to send invitations to all countries without discrimination, and the committee has decided we have the right in principle.”⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Finnish Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games, “Helsinki Capital of Finland: The Olympic Host 1952,” 1952.

⁷⁵ Erik von Frenckell, (speech, Waldorf-Astoria, New York, July 7, 1950) from *The New York Times*, “ALL NATIONS ASKED TO 1952 OLYMPICS; Helsinki Set to Accommodate 7,000 Athletes and Plans Stadium Seating 70,000 Requirements Must Be Met Ticket Prices Not Established,” (The New York Times, July 10, 1950).

Prior to sending invitations, von Frenckell and the OCOG chose to invite everyone to the Olympics, even disputed territories.⁷⁶ Even though Finland was recently at war with Germany, the Germans were barred from the preceding two Olympics because of World War II war crimes, and the political state of Germany was uncertain, the OCOG invited Germany to the Olympics.

Throughout IOC deliberations, which are discussed in detail below in the case studies of the China and Germany exceptions, von Frenckell advocated for inclusion over exclusion. For the Finns and the OCOG, the Olympic Spirit of togetherness prevailed over the Olympic fine print of the Olympic Charter (OC). At the 45th IOC Session in Vienna, 1951, von Frenckell, OCOG President, reminded the other IOC members that “we must be able to invite all athletes of the world without exception.”⁷⁷ As other members discussed the political intentions of various NOCs, von Frenckell redirected attention to the sanctity of the Olympic Movement and the Olympic Spirit. This commitment, in part, can be attributed to Finland joining the Olympics as the Grand Duchy of Finland under the Russian Empire, rather than as independent Finland. Finland joined the Olympic Movement without autonomy, in line with that sentiment, the OCOG sent invitations to the world, hoping to see the world represented regardless of national status.

Von Frenckell, throughout IOC Sessions, appealed to the Olympic Spirit while many other IOC members were entangled by political alignments. In the 1952 OCOG Report, von Frenckell’s statement titled “Task Completed” describes how,

“Sporting youth was invited to Finland from the countries already belonging to the Olympic organisation, but also from the countries which now wished to join it. In some cases this was in conflict with the letter of the Olympic Protocol. Of the 81 countries invited, 79 sent representatives to the Games, 70 sending active competitors. The organisers are proud of this international success.”⁷⁸

⁷⁶The OCOG has the responsibility of sending invitation letters for the Olympic Games.

⁷⁷ Erik von Frenckell, “Meeting Minutes,” (notes, 45th IOC Session, May 1951), Olympic Studies Centre.

⁷⁸ Erik von Frenckell, “Task Completed,” (statement, OCOG Report, 1952), Olympic Studies Centre.

Von Frenckell was conscientious of the OCOG's decision to invite countries without Olympic recognition, but believed extending the Olympic Spirit trumped Olympic Protocol. Despite World War II as a recent memory and the Cold War, Finland's OCOG chose to invite the entire world to the Olympics, even countries and territories without autonomy nor a NOC. Von Frenckell's above statement echoed his sentiments in IOC Sessions where his position on rivaling delegations was to accept delegations to have the youth of the world represented in Helsinki. In his speech at the Festival Hall of the University of Helsinki on July 16, 1952, von Frenckell admitted that as part of the OCOG, "we have done everything in our power, – perhaps according to the minds of some we have done too much – to induce the youth from every part of the world to attend our Olympic Games."⁷⁹ Von Frenckell may be referring to IOC leaders who blurred the lines between political alignment and the Olympic Ideal that Finland aimed to uphold whilst planning the XVth Olympiad. Attributed to the OCOG's inclusion, 69 nations were represented at what would be the largest Olympics up until that point, with 13 Olympic debuts. The Olympics with the most debuts is the 1896 Athens Games with 14, which was the first Olympic Games since the Ancient Greek Olympic Games. At the opening of the 47th Session in Helsinki, two weeks before the Opening Ceremonies, Edström stated that, "Finland is triumphant... So many obstacles both financial, technical, and political have troubled the work but the Organising Committee under the able leadership of Erik von Frenckell has overcome them all."⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Erik von Frenckell, (speech, Festival Hall, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland, July 16, 1952), Olympic Studies Centre.

⁸⁰ Sigfrid Edström, (47th IOC Session).

Finns Appealing for Inclusion

Nearly all Finns advocated for the world's inclusion at the Olympics, regardless of political affiliation. According to a *Pravda* article, a Soviet publication, prior to the Olympics and to the last day of closing ceremonies, "Finnish labor organizations, athletes and everyday citizens from all countries rallied for peace."⁸¹ In line with this sentiment, three days before opening ceremonies in Helsinki, Keijo Savolainen, President⁸² of the Finnish People's Democratic League (SKDL), appealed to the IOC directly, for the world's inclusion at the Olympics. SKDL was a far-left party active from 1944 to 1990. SKDL was heavily influenced by the Communist Party of Finland (SKP), and by extension, the USSR. The USSR's influence in Finland was extended through SKDL's increasing power in the 1950s. In his letter he addresses the inclusion of the PRC, GDR, and People's Republic of Korea.

"To the International Olympic Committee, in the city.

All true athletes, all friends of sport, hope that the Olympic Games will be the great celebration of peace and international friendship. When the organization "*Finnish Gold Medalists*", in the spring of 1951, issued an appeal signed by a large number of Olympic record holders, inviting everyone to contribute in their own way to the effort of "*making the 1952 Olympic Games the great Olympiad of Peace*," it found a wide response within the sporting circles of our country.

Thus, in December 1951, at the Scandinavian Peace Conference held in Stockholm, Finnish athletes proposed an appeal to athletes, which was unanimously accepted by the Conference. The appeal, which calls for an Olympiad of Peace, ends with the following words:

"May the Olympic flame burn as a sign of the ardent will of the sporting youth of the world: to preserve peace."

⁸¹ "Prevratiť Olimpijskie Igry v Prazdnik Mira," (*Pravda*, July 20, 1952).

⁸² He signed the letter "Le Président." There are no other sources that validate this.

After the Conference, this appeal was signed in Finland by a large number of gold medal holders, by other eminent athletes, by thousands of active sportsmen, and by sports enthusiasts. Similar appeals and declarations were issued in Austria, in France, and in several other countries, receiving broad support from the great masses of athletes.

However, one fact does not accord with these hopes and these expressions: the People's Republic of China, the German Democratic Republic, and the People's Republic of Korea—for reasons that are clearly non-sporting and contrary to the Olympic ideal—have been deprived of the right to send their teams to the Helsinki Games. We sincerely hope that the International Olympic Committee, taking into consideration the hopes of the great peace-loving masses in Finland and in other countries, will accept the participation of the aforementioned countries in the Olympiad. Furthermore, we expect the International Olympic Committee, in general, to do everything possible to ensure that the Olympic Games take place under the sign of friendship among the sporting youth of the entire world and the fraternity of nations.”⁸³

Savolainen's motivation in writing this appeal as a SKDL politician was to increase communists' Soviet-aligned representation at the Helsinki Olympics. Savolainen received education in the Soviet Union and East Germany, furthering his commitment to seeing the USSR and GDR delegations at the Olympics. In the letter, he referenced the organization the “Finnish Gold Medalists” that advocated for the youth of the world to be represented at Helsinki. In addition to the “Finnish Gold Medalists,” Finns of all political affiliations advocated for every nation's inclusion in Helsinki. Even though Savolainen's motivations were clearly political, Finland seemed united in wanting the whole world represented in its capital city. Savolainen used Olympic verbiage and the sanctity of the Olympic Ideal to appeal to the IOC to enable Finland to host the “great Olympiad of Peace.” Another organization, also closely aligned to the SKP, the “Partisans of Peace of Finland” described their “ardent hope of seeing the Helsinki Games

⁸³ Keijo Savolainen to the International Olympic Committee, July 16, 1952.

become a celebration of friendship and peace” among the youth of the world.⁸⁴ Finns’ prolonged support of hosting the Olympics in Helsinki continued to reflect Finland’s commitment to the Olympic Movement.

Towards Opening Ceremonies and the Games

In a July 18, 1952, *The Washington Post* article by Red Smith, the day before the Opening Ceremonies, Smith described how “true sportsmanship,” which he attributed to the Finns, “may save [the] Olympics.”⁸⁵ Addressing how Helsinki was “practically rebuilt... overnight in order to entertain the world’s greatest muscle carnival;”⁸⁶ Smith believed that with the addition of the Soviet delegation, the Helsinki Olympics were bound to be the “strangest” Games loaded with Cold War political implications.⁸⁷ However, Smith credited Finland stating that:

“Physically, the job that Finland has done is beyond comparison. Up here close to the edge of the world, they have literally chopped away forests to give the world's athletes elbow room, they have flung up countless buildings of granite and stucco and steel, they have filled every available bed, they have set up tents in every park and public square to feed the tens of thousands of visitors who are making the city bulge like a chipmunk's cheeks. Never before have such accommodations been created in such circumstances for any kind of sports competition. Yet for reasons beyond Finland's control, it is not yet possible to be sure whether this is to be strictly a sports competition, or a collision of political ideologies.”⁸⁸

In the smallest host city, the Finns opened their homes to tourists, accommodated excessive requests, and rebuilt a war-torn city in order to entertain the world in peaceful competition at the beginning of the Cold War. Helsinki’s investment in the Olympic Games was enormous,

⁸⁴ Matthieu Barberousse, *Les Athlètes D'Europe de L'Est et les Jeux Olympiques: Leur Participation aux Jeux Olympiques de 1952: Guerre ou Paix?*, 1993.

⁸⁵ Red Smith, “True Sportsmanship may Save Olympics,” *The Washington Post*, July 19, 1952, 8.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

especially considering Finland was burdened with Soviet war reparations. The City of Helsinki installed traffic lights for the first time, built an airport and a port, and erected dozens of buildings and stadiums for the Olympic Games. To ease the burden on bartenders, the Finnish government commissioned Finnish companies Hartwall and Alko to create the Long Drink for thirsty tourists. By navigating fragile relations with the USSR, by way of the Paasikivi-Kekkonen Line, Finland was able to display its independence on the world stage as a separate entity from the USSR.

The Olympic Truce: “Ekekheiria”

While most Olympic discourse and academia surrounding the XVth Olympiad is dominated by the Soviet debut, which brought the Cold War to sports, it is rarely mentioned how Finland brought the world together on neutral grounds. Finland, a physical buffer zone between East and West, became the stage for an astounding clash between the United States and the Soviet Union. In the hopes of orchestrating a neutral Games on Finnish soil, the Finnish OCOG declared Ekekheiria, the ancient Greek truce first proclaimed in 776 BC, nine days before the Opening Ceremonies on July 10, 1952. Finnish OCOG President von Frenckell's speech was given at the Olympic Stadium in Helsinki, originally built for the postponed 1940 Olympics and idle throughout the devastating 1940s. Von Frenckell proclaimed:

“The capital of Finland acts as hosts to the fifteenth Olympic games in 1952. It sees therein both an honorable mission and a precious duty to function in the spirit which raised the athletic games of antiquity at the little community of Olympia to a great and holy festival. That spirit made the simple olive branch of victory more desirable to the youth of Hellas than personal advantage. That spirit lives on after millennia, and once more assembles all the world's youth to contend for the symbol of peaceful victory and athletic honor. Enmity, war and drawn weapons were remote from the consecrated fire at Olympia. Before it was lit upon the altar, a truce of gods, the Ekekheiria was announced in Greece. And the Olympic truce was maintained inviolate... The greatest revival of modern times—the Olympic games— should be held in an atmosphere of international understanding in which

the same ancient treaty must prevail... For the times the games last, the organizers proclaim Ekekheiria, the olympic truce.”⁸⁹

In 1952, with the debuts and re-entries of many controversial countries including Germany, China, the People’s Republic of Korea, the USSR, and Israel, an olive branch was a necessity for a successful Olympics. By declaring the Olympic Truce, von Frenckell asserted Finland’s neutrality, continuing to carefully navigate its relationship with global powers. Additionally, on the tenth page of “The Official Report of the Organizing Committee for the Games of the XVth Olympiad,” the OCOG provides von Frenckell’s statement. Neutrality was not only essential for the Finnish government, but also the OCOG and Finns who hoped to see everyone represented at the XVth Olympiad.

Chapter IV: The USSR Enters the Olympics

Most research on the 1952 Helsinki Olympics revolves around the USSR’s Olympic debut in the context of the Cold War. I intend to address the Soviet debut from the perspective of the Finnish OCOG and how the American and Soviet rivalry complicated Finland’s attempts at hosting a neutral, apolitical Games. Comradery between American and Soviet athletes was enabled by Finnish accommodation and inclusion. The Olympic Truce, proclaimed by the OCOG, preemptively mitigated the Cold War media flood rapidly advancing towards Helsinki and demonstrated the Finns continued commitment to the Olympic Spirit. The OCOG’s invitation to the USSR continued Finland’s commitment to inviting countries whilst disregarding Cold War politics.

⁸⁹ Erik von Frenckell, (speech, Olympic Stadium; Helsinki, Finland, July 10, 1952) from “Finns Ask Olympic Truce, Friendly Spirit for the Games,” (Reno Evening Gazette Sports, July 10, 1952).

USSR Olympic Ambitions

The USSR refused to participate in the Olympic Games prior to the Helsinki Olympics in 1952, arguing the Olympics were a bourgeois and capitalist institution. The political nature of the USSR cast the Olympics aside as a West-aligned athletic event with little Soviet interest. For decades, communist newspapers denounced the Olympics and the USSR held “Spartakiads” as an alternative to the Olympics for Soviet and Iron Bloc athletes. However, the USSR actively pursued participation in the XVth Olympiad beginning in 1950. Many newspapers attribute the escalating Cold War as the sole purpose for the USSR’s Olympic debut. The Helsinki Olympics were the first “Cold War Olympics” and perhaps the most notable because it was the first physical confrontation of Americans and Soviets on an international stage. The rivalry between the US and USSR captured all the media attention at the Helsinki Olympics; little to no attention was paid to other delegations or to presenting Finland as the Olympic host.

The USSR continued to have influence in Finland after Finland’s independence from the Russian Empire in 1917. Finland had a powerful communist party in 1952, namely the Communist Party of Finland (SKP) and the Finnish People’s Democratic League (SKDL), which were both ideologically and financially supported by the USSR. Additionally, all of Finland’s foreign policies were carefully designed to assert Finland’s neutral position. For the USSR, Finland was a buffer zone between the West and East. Finland, fearful of USSR reprisal, didn’t enter treaties with the West. The Paasikivi-Kekkonen Line underpinned Finland’s dilemma of walking a tightrope between asserting its independence as a Western nation and appeasing the USSR, its bigger, more powerful neighbor. Finland’s co-existence with the USSR became even more delicate during the Cold War, where balancing neutrality between East and West and asserting independence became more arduous.

In Kristina Exner-Carl's book *Sport and Politics in Finland's Relations with the Soviet Union 1940-1952*, Exner-Carl explores Finland's sporting co-existence with the USSR. She argues that,

“From the point of view of the Soviet Union, Finland was certainly an interesting laboratory in terms of peaceful coexistence. In any case, initially, Finland was used as a ‘model nation’ to personify correct and advantageous relationships for both parties. The participation of the Soviet Union in the Helsinki Olympic Games can be perfectly understood as a sign of this policy”⁹⁰

Peaceful co-existence between Finland and the USSR was extended to the USSR and the world at the Olympics. As an act of goodwill, Finland invited the USSR to participate in the Helsinki Games.

An additional motivation for the USSR to participate in the XVth Olympiad was to promote its satellite territories. The USSR attempted to have athletes from the Iron Bloc, the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) compete for communism. A greater number of communist-aligned athletes participating in the Olympics increased the likelihood of a higher overall medal count, thus winning the Olympics over the Americans. After the end of World War II, the USSR entered agreements with the PRC and orchestrated the actions of the Iron Bloc. According to Jennifer Parks, “*Fizkultura i sport* frequently featured sporting contacts between the USSR and athletes from the ‘peoples’ democracies.’ To compete against the West meant to achieve international prestige for eastern bloc athletes and their socialist system.”⁹¹ The USSR's propaganda machine promoted a united

⁹⁰ Kristina Exner Carl, *Sport and Politics in Finland's Relations with the Soviet Union 1940-1952*, (Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag, 1997), 260. from Nicholas C. Niggli, “Diplomatie sportive et relations internationales: Helsinki 1952, les ‘Jeux Olympiques de la Guerre froide’?,” (*Relations Internationales*, February 2002), 267-485.

⁹¹ Jennifer Parks, *Red Sport, Red Tape: the Olympic Games, the Soviet Sports Bureaucracy, and the Cold War, 1952-1980*, (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2009).

front of socialist states at the Olympic Games. The USSR's development of sporting institutions in its satellite states demonstrated the Soviet's early commitment to winning the Cold War at the Helsinki Olympics through representation and medal counts.

USSR NOC

The Soviets began pursuing IOC membership in 1950. The aspiring NOC arrived in Lausanne with a proposal that outlined that the "Moscow government be permitted to appoint its delegates to the IOC, that Russian become an official language of the Olympic Movement (joining English and French), and that the Soviet Union be awarded a permanent seat on the Executive Committee."⁹² The IOC declined all the terms immediately. After denouncing the Olympics for decades, the Soviets early attempts at strong-arming the IOC backfired.

At the 45th Session of the IOC in Vienna from May 7th through 9th, 1951, Finnish OCOG President Erik von Frenckell insisted on the USSR's recognition, citing the Olympic Spirit as reason to accept the Soviet delegation. The IOC recognized the USSR NOC with a vote of 31 in favor of recognition and 3 abstentions. The USSR NOC requested that Constantin Adrianov, the former president of the Moscow Sports Union and the first president of the USSR NOC, be admitted as an IOC member, even though he could not speak French or English, the official Olympic languages. The IOC was supportive of Adrianov and he became the primary organizer of the NOC. The only reservation was that Adrianov's admittance "was symbolic of Stalin's influence that he was able to bring in one of his own men to this important diplomatic role."⁹³ Upon arriving in Vienna, Adrianov stated that, "the Olympic Committee of the U.S.S.R.

⁹² Barberousse, *Les Athlètes D'Europe*, 1993.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

will sincerely cooperate with the IOC for the good of the Olympic Movement in his country and for world peace.”⁹⁴ Adrianov was accepted as an IOC member.

By January of 1952, the USSR NOC requested for Alexsey Romanov’s, another Soviet sporting administrator, admittance into the IOC as a member. In addition, the USSR NOC requested again for Russian to be added as an official Olympic language and that volleyball and women’s basketball be added to the Olympic program.⁹⁵ Romanov became an IOC member in February of 1952. Before its first Olympics, the USSR was awarded two IOC members; many NOCs did not have an IOC member, but the size of the USSR deemed IOC members necessary. The request to add Russian was denied for a second time.

The IOC and the Cold War

Upon hearing of the USSR’s intention to join the Olympic Movement, in a June 14, 1950, letter from Edström to Brundage, Edström stated that, “As you know, I have kept my fingers crossed on the efforts to bring them [the Soviets] into the Olympic family. Not understanding fair play, good sportsmanship and amateurism, I am sure they will bring with them nothing but trouble.”⁹⁶ Edström wanted the USSR to participate in the Olympics because the USSR’s involvement would bring millions of people into the Olympic Movement. However, Edström’s optimism was stunted by his fear that Olympic regulations would be disregarded by the USSR. It has been discussed by academics since, but the Soviet government’s involvement in the Olympic delegation and the athletes certainly strayed from Olympic regulations, notably in terms of amateurism.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Soviet NOC to Erik von Frenckell, January 29, 1952.

⁹⁶ Parks, *Red Sport, Red Tape*, 2009.

In October 1950, IOC members debated the Soviet entry, arguing whether the USSR could be accepted, considering “of course everything in Russia is governed by the State and also the sport. What shall we do?”⁹⁷ Additionally, there was uncertainty over how the Iron Bloc would be represented at the Olympics. State involvement in sport complicated the IOC’s verbiage to keep sport and politics separate. In April of 1951, Chancellor Otto Mayer wrote to Edström that “I am really glad, if we could have the USSR Olympic Committee recognized, as we otherwise will have the athletic world divided in two big sections—East and West.”⁹⁸ This sentiment was carried by many IOC members in the early 1950s who hoped to unite the world at the Olympics. The most political sentiment from the IOC came from Brundage, the American IOC Vice President, who wrote to an American newspaper:

“The year, 1952, is a crucial one for the United States Olympic Team—and the outcome of the competitions at Helsinki will have a definite influence on our nation’s political position throughout the world. For the first time, Russia will enter a team of the best athletes she can muster and train. What’s more, Stalin will pay all expenses, and issue his usual orders for nothing short of victory. The instructions are to win or else! The reason is obvious. Stalin’s big weapon is propaganda—and he hopes— desperately—that the United States team will not be complete—and that he can publicize our weakness in morale as well as in the stamina and ability of the US athletes. We can’t let this happen!”⁹⁹

Brundage was anti-communist and enabled his personal beliefs to bleed into the public and Olympic spheres. Brundage’s sentiment was synonymous with the Cold War media that overwhelmed the Helsinki Games with heightened attention to medal counts between the USSR and US.

⁹⁷ Barberousse, *Les Athlètes D’Europe*, 1993.

⁹⁸ Otto Mayer to Sigfrid Edström, April 1951 from Barberousse, *Les Athletes D’Europe*, 1993, 33.

⁹⁹ Barberousse, *Les Athlètes D’Europe*, 1993, 339.

Finnish Inclusion

The Finnish OCOG was dedicated to inviting everyone to its Olympics, including the USSR. At the Copenhagen IOC Session in May of 1950, von Frenckell, Finland's OCOG President and IOC Member stated that,

“Finland has fought 24 wars with Russia. That would not prevent Finland from welcoming the Russians to the Helsinki Games, if they were part of the Olympic Movement. There is no possible future in Olympism if we continue to maintain hatreds. One all too easily and skillfully uses Coubertin's words to defend a cause. But one must not forget that the Renovator [Coubertin] also said that the Games are open to all the youth of the world.”¹⁰⁰

This powerful sentiment demonstrated Finland's apolitical intentions on inviting the world to its Olympics. Even though Finland was actively paying war reparations to the USSR, Finland extended an invitation to the Olympics and vouched for the USSR's IOC recognition. It is debated whether the Soviet influence in the Finnish political system persuaded the Finns to advocate for the USSR's inclusion at the Games. However, Finland actively advocated for the rest of the world's participation, without regard to politics. Red Smith, an American journalist, wrote an article entitled, “True Sportsmanship May Save Olympics.” for *The Washington Post* on July 19, 1952, depicting Finland's position. Smith explained how, “For the first time Soviet Russia is competing. This is as it should be and as Finland wanted it, strictly in accordance with the Olympic ideal, which conceives of the stadium as a vast playpen where the children of the world romp through their games without regard to the distinctions.”¹⁰¹

Opposite to Finland's blanket inclusion, letters between Soviet politicians and Soviet sports administrator Aleksey Romanov allude to the USSR's distaste of the Finns. In letters

¹⁰⁰ Erik von Frenckell, “Meeting Minutes,” (notes, 44th IOC Session, Copenhagen, Denmark, May 1950).

¹⁰¹ Smith, “True Sportsmanship,” 8.

between Romanov and Malenkov, a high-ranking USSR secretary and Stalin's heir, Romanov reported that the Helsinki OCOG was "pro-American" and composed of "prominent leaders of bourgeois parties" and led by "a group of war criminals."¹⁰² There were former Finnish military officers working in the OCOG and Romanov's sentiments reflected the belief that the USSR was "setting foot on 'enemy soil,' this striking language reflects lasting antipathy towards the Finns following World War II."¹⁰³ Even though Finland had been on the opposing side to Soviet aggression for decades, it was the Soviets that entangled its political commitments with its Olympic intentions. In a personal letter between von Frenckell and Mayer, dated May 3rd, 1952, von Frenckell alluded to the politically charged arguments the Soviets were presenting in Helsinki.

"Some Russian delegates have been here for a week negotiating the participation of sportsmen, assistants, food, transportation and housing. The start was very difficult, because the Russians claimed privileges even in the form that they underlined the political relations.

I strongly refused to negotiate on that basis and explained that we are prepared to offer the same facilities to them as to all other countries. Today the delegates are leaving, because they accepted 100% of our proposals."¹⁰⁴

The Finnish OCOG prohibited Finland's relations with the USSR to bleed onto the Olympic stage. The Soviet delegation wasn't to receive additional resources because the Olympics were held in Finland.

Cold War Fragility: A Nod to World War II Remnants

The USSR and Germany lost the most soldiers in World War II, namely during battles on the Eastern Front. The Helsinki Olympics brought both countries together; both countries also

¹⁰² Nikolai Romanov to Georgii Malenkov, April 30, 1952.

¹⁰³ Rachel Maria Hutchison, *The Battle for Peace in the Early Cold War: Soviet Press Coverage of the 1952 Helsinki Olympics*, (The Ohio State University, 2022).

¹⁰⁴ Erik von Frenckell to Otto Mayer, May 3rd, 1952.

fought wars against Finland in the 1940s. The German Question, which will be discussed in a later section, was spearheaded by IOC Member Dr. Karl Ritter von Halt. Dr. von Halt was an IOC member and had been a member of the Executive Committee (EC) prior to World War II. During the war, Dr. von Halt led the Nationalsozialistischer Reichsbund für Leibesübungen (National Socialist League of the Reich for Physical Exercise) (NSRL), the sports and physical education organization in Nazi Germany. Following the war's end, from 1945 to 1950, Dr. von Halt was imprisoned in the former Buchenwald concentration camp, NKVD special camp Number 2, by the USSR. Letters between Edström and Brundage, between 1946 and 1950, discuss the USSR's arrest and imprisonment of Dr. von Halt for his involvement with the Nazi Party. Brundage and Edström referred to Dr. von Halt as a "friend" and expressed their fears for his death until Halt was confirmed alive in 1950.¹⁰⁵ In addition to being "very good friends," Dr. von Halt, Brundage, and Edström "all belonged to the so-called 'Beer Drinking Society'".¹⁰⁶ Brundage was public about his appreciation of Germany and was supportive of Dr. von Halt's German NOC. Even though Dr. von Halt was among the ranks of high Nazi officials and imprisoned in a Soviet camp, IOC members continued to regard him highly and he retained his positions within the IOC after he was released, on the EC, as a German IOC member, and as the leader of the NOC of Germany from 1951 to 1961. In 1950, he was imprisoned for Nazi involvement but in 1951, one year later, he was able to exert influence on IOC decision-making as part of the EC. Under Dr. von Halt's leadership, the West Germans successfully competed at the Helsinki Olympics without East German participation. This was a political victory for the

¹⁰⁵ Parks, *Red Sport, Red Tape*, 2009.

¹⁰⁶ *Leif Yttergren*, "J. Sigrid Edström and the Nurmi Affair of 1932: The Struggle of the Amateur Fundamentalists Against Professionalism in the Olympic Movement," (*International Society of International Historians*, November 2007), 23.

FRG because the FRG was represented on the Olympic stage as the only German team and the Soviet satellite, the GDR, was left out.

IOC Member Dr. von Halt's imprisonment speaks to the political gravitas of the 1952 Summer Olympics. Many countries, recently at war, came together to celebrate the Olympics for the first time since World War II. Additionally, the IOC's apolitical nature enabled Dr. von Halt to hold a position of power following World War II, despite his involvement in the Nazi Party. The IOC professed neutrality enabled Dr. von Halt to hold his positions within the IOC, but simultaneously, Olympic debates were reasoned along political lines. Finland's delicate position between East and West extended to the fragility of European peace in 1952.

Chapter V: Otaniemi Olympic Village

Finnish OCOG Reality Check

In 1952, Helsinki's population was approximately 381,000, and the OCOG anticipated 70,000 guests and printed over two million tickets for the Olympics. This daunting reality presented numerous logistical challenges. After realizing the realities of having to host nearly 5,000 athletes, OCOG President von Frenckell delivered a speech to the IOC declaring:

"The next principle is that of the brotherhood Baron de Coubertin wishes to support by proposing that all athletes should live in one Olympic village. During Baron Coubertin's lifetime, however, the number of competing athletes in the Games did not exceed 3000. In Berlin, over 4000 athletes participated and this number was still surpassed in London. Including managers, cooks and other staff in London the figure given to me by the British exceeded 6.500, If all the nations who have taken part in previous Games wish to compete in Finland, and, if besides this some of the nations who took part for the first time in London wish to enter with bigger teams this time, we will have to face the probable arrival of some 6,000 athletes and including the abovementioned staff over 9000 persons in all. It seems impossible to house such a crowd in one village- this would be a small city and no village - with all the special facilities needed: hairdressers, tailors, medicine service, bath, post, telegrams, etc. Therefore we have decided to cut down the number of athletes and staff to be placed in the actual village to about 5000. We have the intention to house the rest in other big camps, following

the principle that athletes representing the same sport like to be together. We will have a special camp for riders, marksmen, yachtsmen, footballers, etc, and, naturally, separate camps for the ladies.”¹⁰⁷

The Finnish OCOG was prepared to create multiple different villages, given the size of Helsinki and the growing delegation numbers. To remain faithful to the Olympic Ideal, von Frenckell referenced Baron de Coubertin, the creator of the modern Olympic Games. He explained that de Coubertin’s reality in 1894, when he restored the Olympics, was not the same one as Helsinki in 1952. The OCOG intended to create sport and gender specific housing, to encourage intermingling and togetherness; however, Helsinki’s Olympic Villages became fuel for the growing Cold War flame.

Soviet Union and the Olympic Village

The USSR was determined to keep its athletes, including those from the Iron Bloc, separate from the rest of the delegations. At the 1948 London Olympics, the USSR was invited as an observer by the IOC and as a result, “the defections of athletes from Eastern Europe had been very numerous. Romanian, Bulgarian or Czechoslovaks had taken advantage of the freedoms granted to athletes to flee the communist regimes.”¹⁰⁸ The defections in 1948 damaged the prestige and global image of the USSR, the reasoning for refusing to house their athletes with Westerners. Nicholas C. Niggli, writer of *Sports Diplomacy and International Relations: Helsinki 1952, the “Cold War Olympics?”*, argued that political defections from Iron Bloc athletes was “very embarrassing for the image of a socio-political system that was intended to be at the forefront of the fight for freedom.”¹⁰⁹ According to Matthieu Barberousse, the writer of *Les Athlètes d’Europe de l’Est et les jeux olympiques: Leur Participation aux jeux olympiques de*

¹⁰⁷ Erik von Frenckell, “Annexe Five,” (speech to the IOC), Olympic Studies Centre.

¹⁰⁸ Barberousse, *Les Athlètes D’Europe*, 1993.

¹⁰⁹ Niggli, “Diplomatie sportive,” 479.

1952: *Guerre ou Paix?*, “the Soviets realized that communism was not a popular worldview,” which increased their inclination to self-isolate.¹¹⁰ The Kremlin was eager to keep its athletes segregated. Isolating other nations’ athletes from the Soviet Union and the people’s republics minimized the possibility of defection and protected their players from scrutiny from the other competitors.

After accepting the invitation to compete in Helsinki, the Soviet Sports Committee planned to “house their athletes at Leningrad, 3 air miles from Helsinki, and fly them in daily, or else directly across the Gulf of Finland, only 50 miles away.”¹¹¹ The USSR was prepared to fly athletes to Helsinki for the 16 days of the Games to avoid confrontation with the West. The Soviet realization that communism wasn’t globally championed and its own athletes were trying to flee it, made the flight from Leningrad, modern day St. Petersburg, to Helsinki appealing. The OCOG’s planning challenges became advantageous for the Soviets’ Olympic housing hopes of segregation. Barberousse explained how,

“Only twenty-nine nations had committed to attending the Games when the organizing committee began planning the athletes’ village. At this time, it selected the Otaniemi Polytechnic Institute as housing; however, more countries soon decided to compete, increasing the amount of dorm space needed for the athletes, coaches, and officials participating in the Games. The organizing committee planned and built a new village, but the Soviet delegation decided that its athletes and those from the other Iron Curtain countries would remain at Otaniemi apart from everyone else. That they chose to do so despite the cramped conditions there underscored the political aspect of this decision.”

Otaniemi was a newer university city, a few miles from Helsinki’s city center. The main Olympic Village was in Käpylä, in downtown Helsinki. Barberousse also added that the Finns offered housing elsewhere and were refused by the Soviets. The Soviet delegation, their satellite states,

¹¹⁰ Barberousse, *Les Athlètes D’Europe*, 1993.

¹¹¹ “U.S., Russia Agree on Steaks, Rowing,” (The *New York Times*, July 25, 1952) from Hutchinson, *The Battle for Peace in the Early Cold War*, (The Ohio State University, 2022).

and the people's democracies stayed in Otaniemi, separate from the rest of the world. According to Rachel Hutchinson, "The Central Committee also arranged for 100 catering staff workers, thirty waitresses, and additional service personnel, such as dishwashers, to accompany the athletes to Helsinki and fully prepare all their meals."¹¹² In addition to living separately from other athletes, the Soviet delegation planned on eating isolated from the rest, further limiting the communication between East and West. The Central Committee made all preparations to limit defections. The Olympic Ideal, which is grounded in global community and togetherness, was undermined by Soviet willpower. Rather than encouraging discourse and intermingling, the Central Committee created a physical curtain between its Olympic delegations and the rest of the world. Even though von Frenckell earlier refused to grant the Soviet NOC excessive resources, the Soviet delegation stayed at Otaniemi throughout the duration of the Games. Until the Soviet NOC were pressured to change their minds, the Central Committee intended to close Otaniemi to all visitors.

Curiously, the Finnish OCOG reports did not directly state that the Soviets were quartered in Otaniemi. In the "Preparations for the Celebration of the XVth Olympic Games Helsinki 1952" published by the OCOG in July 1951, the OCOG stated that there would be an Olympic Village in Otaniemi consisting of, "three group buildings housing 1,000-1,200 competitors."¹¹³ In later reports, the Finnish OCOG made no distinction between the competitors at the Olympic Villages in Käpylä and Otaniemi. Contrastingly, the book *Soviet Olympic Champions*, published in Moscow, in 1954, and the "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics," states that Otaniemi was where "the teams of the USSR and people's democracies were quartered."¹¹⁴

¹¹² Nikolai Romanov to Georgii Malenkov, April 30, 1952, (Vartanian, "Interv'iu Polveka Spustia") from Hutchinson, *The Battle for Peace in the Early Cold War*, (The Ohio State University, 2022).

¹¹³ Finnish Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games, "Preparations for the Celebration of the XVth Olympic Games Helsinki 1952," (OCOG, July 1951), Olympic Studies Centre.

¹¹⁴ *Soviet Olympic Champions*, (Moscow, 1953), Olympic Studies Centre.

Motivated by the Cold War media frenzy in Helsinki, Americans and European journalists paid more attention to the two Olympic Villages.

Western Media Fascination

Western media began creating an enticing Olympic Cold War narrative out of the Olympic Village separation. It was popularly known that the Soviet NOC chose to live in isolation and closed access to the public; American media ran with the story that the Cold War rivalry extended to the Olympic Villages. One journalist from *The New York Times* deemed Otaniemi the “segregated Olympic Village.”¹¹⁵

According to a French journalist at *Le Monde*, Olivier Merlin,

“If you want to go to the 'eastern' Olympic Village in Otaniemi, you must first respect the times reserved for the press: from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Then, armed with your pass, you have to set off on an expedition like a forest clearer. Otaniemi is a hidden woodland retreat 10 kilometers from Helsinki, as bleak as a Brandenburg pine forest. It is accessed by a potholed road which, in the evening, at the hour when the pale twilight shimmers on the Nordic lakes, seems to plunge towards the lair of the big bad wolf.”¹¹⁶

Since the Soviet NOC closed the village to visitors, the media’s main objective became seeing the inside of Otaniemi. The American and European publics were fascinated by the opportunity to hear about how the Soviets were living and it became the ultimate mission of journalists to uncover the mystique around Otaniemi. After the Soviet NOC was criticized for their closed village and opened it to the public, it was reported that there “has been no curtain between Russian athletes and those of the United States.”¹¹⁷ There are many reports from Soviet, European, and American journalists alluding to Soviet and American athletes visiting each

¹¹⁵ George Axelsson, “Russian Athletes on Good Behavior,” (*New York Times*, July 27, 1952).

¹¹⁶ Olivier Merlin, “In the Russian Retreat...,” (*Le Monde*, July 27-28, 1952), from Barberousse, *Les Athletes D’Europe*, 1993.

¹¹⁷ Allison Danzig, “Ancient Ceremony Today to Open Olympic Games for 70 Nations at Helsinki,” (*The New York Times*, July 19, 1952).

other's villages daily and trading Olympic pins, fraternizing with each other, eating dinner together, and participating in movie nights. In addition, during the athletic events, there's many sources describing American and Soviet athletes helping each other and socializing friendly.¹¹⁸ The continuous flow of optimistic news coverage dimmed the political rivalry of the Cold War. The Olympic Village controversy became outdated news, as more stories of comradery made headlines. The primary source that addresses comradery between Soviet and American athletes is Steve Murdock's book, *Peace Won the Olympics*. Murdock was an American writer and his book was published by the National Council for American-Soviet Friendship in 1953. Murdock only addressed positive interactions between Americans and Soviets. This bias that presents Helsinki as synonymous with world peace, dispels the aggressive Cold War narratives that were published leading up to and during the Olympics. Murdock, writing on behalf of American-Soviet friendship, eased Cold War antagonism, by detailing stories of friendship and goodwill. Many American and Soviet journalists legitimate Murdock's stories. The primary vehicle used to empower the Cold War rivalry was through medal counts, which remained disputed even after Closing Ceremonies.

Thin Veil of Separation

The Olympics enabled Soviet and American athletes to physically interact with one another and bond. American athlete, Robert "Bob" Richards, stated that, "I honestly can't see why people all over the world can't get along like the competitors."¹¹⁹ US decathlon champion, Bob Mathias, described that, "as far as I can see, Russian athletes in the Olympic Games are just plain, ordinary nice girls and boys."¹²⁰ Students at American universities including Dick

¹¹⁸ *The New York Times*. "THE OLYMPIC SPIRIT," (*The New York Times*, July 27, 1952).

¹¹⁹ Steve Murdock, *Peace Won the Olympics*, (National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, 1953), Olympic Studies Centre.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

Hamilton, a UCLA student, argued that, “I believe that if the people of the world could conduct themselves as their athletes did at the Olympics that war would be on the way out.”¹²¹ The comradery between athletes dispelled the illusion that Soviets and Americans thought the same as their respective governments. The athletes weren’t engaging in a Cold War; it was the media trying to present the Cold War narrative through the Olympic Village separation. In reality, the iron curtain between Otaniemi and Käpylä was a “thin veil” that became promising to the world of a better future. AP writer Will Grimsley described how the “iron curtain” at Otaniemi was “made of tissue paper.”¹²²

According to writer, Steve Murdock,¹²³ “Fraternization between sports stars of the East and the West became so commonplace that after a while it ceased to be news.”¹²⁴ This environment of togetherness was created by the Finnish OCOG and its declaration of the Olympic Truce “Ekekeheiria” and accommodation of the world’s athletes. M. Sagatelyan, a Soviet journalist wrote after the Games that,

“More important perhaps than all the sports results was that priceless something not registered in the table of records. We refer to that which focused on the Olympics the interest of millions of people the world over, even those who had never been sports enthusiasts, namely the coming together of many nations, the ties of friendship that were formed among the participants, the atmosphere of mutual understanding and good will that prevailed throughout those 16 eventful days, holding out as it were a promise of peace and tranquility and a flourishing of creative forces.”¹²⁵

In 1952, the Olympic Truce was more necessary than ever. The Finnish OCOG ensured politics wouldn’t interfere with the sanctity of the Olympic tradition by proclaiming the Truce. The OCOG even went a step further to ensure the youth of the world were invited, even inviting

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ This source was published by the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship in 1953.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

nations without recognized NOCs. Even though Helsinki was the smallest city to host the Olympics, the world was invited to Helsinki to participate in the Olympics, emboldened by the Olympic Spirit. Lord Burghley, an IOC member of Great Britain, declared that “The Olympic Games of 1952 marked a form of truce in the ‘cold war...’ the olympic spirit is strong not only in Finland but throughout the world.”¹²⁶ Beyond being a geographical buffer zone, Finland became a bridge between East and West. The Finnish OCOG attempted to quiet the Cold War narrative and amplify the “Olympic Spirit” in Helsinki.

Chapter VI: Germany and China Case Studies

Leading up to the Helsinki Olympics, the IOC tussled with two major questions: German and Chinese participation. Both questions are case studies posing similar, yet distinct, challenges to the IOC and the OCOG. By addressing IOC decision-making through meeting notes and telegrams, the fragility of the Olympic Charter becomes glaringly obvious. The 1952 “Rules for the Regional Games” states that “Contestants must belong to National Federations which are members of International Federations and participating countries must have National Olympic Committees recognised by the International Olympic Committee.”¹²⁷ The Olympic Charter clearly states that only one delegation can represent a nation, in Article I, a regulation that's been enforced by precedent. Article I created a clear issue for the IOC that consciously attempted to act neutrally and without political divulgements. In the Finnish OCOG’s “Organizing of the XVth Olympiad,” it states:

“Any country wishing to take part in the Olympic Games must appoint a National Olympic Committees It must include, among other members: 1) representatives of all the National Governing Bodies in that country whose sports are included in the Olympic Programme; 2) representatives of the country to the I.O.C (1952)...They must be independent of any political, commercial or religious interference, and

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ “Rules for the Regional Games,” (International. Olympic Committee, 1952), Olympic Studies Centre.

consider, when decisions have to be taken, only the general interest of the Olympic movement and without being swayed by local questions or by the desire to favour their athletes... National Olympic Committees must be independent and autonomous. The function of the N.O.C. is very important as on it falls the duty of watching over the maintenance of the Olympic spirit and of finding the means of overcoming all the difficulties that may arise.”¹²⁸

When tasked with choosing which delegations were to represent China and Germany at the XVth Olympics, the IOC knowingly broke its own regulations and claimed that both the China and Germany problems were exceptional cases.

Following World War II, Germany was barred from participating in the 1948 London Games because of its condemnable war crimes and couldn't create a unified delegation in time for the 1952 Oslo Winter Games. Germany became divided between the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1949. The FRG previously had IOC recognition and had an IOC member, Dr. Karl Ritter von Halt, who was serving as the President of the German Olympic Committee. The GDR was a Soviet satellite state with ambitions to participate in the Games. Following the Chinese Civil War, the People's Republic of China (PRC, Mainland China, Peking) and the Republic of China (ROC, Taiwan, Formosa) fought over Chinese representation at the Olympics. Both nations refuted the others' participation, claiming to represent all of China. The China Athletic Federation that once operated out of mainland China before the Chinese Civil War and now in Formosa, Taiwan (ROC), had IOC recognition. The PRC, referred to as “Red China” by many IOC members because of its communist affiliation, hoped to join the Soviet Union (USSR) in both of their debuts, to celebrate communism.

¹²⁸ Finnish Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games, “Organizing of the XVth Olympiad,” 1952, Olympic Studies Centre.

PRC and GDR Representation

In a letter from Brundage to Edström and Mayer, dated June 16, 1952, Brundage expressed that he concurred with Edström's initial decision to deny both the PRC and GDR delegations.

“Neither the Red Chinese nor the East German Olympic Committees have been recognized.

The East Germans signed an agreement and then repudiated it. The action of their delegates at Copenhagen is indefensible.

Neither the East Germans nor the Red Chinese have been recognized by more than one or two International Federations.

The International Federations have not heard from Nationalist China, nor has she paid her dues since before the war.

Furthermore, everyone knows that political factors heavily outweigh sport in both these situations. Never have we had much representation from China in the Olympic Games and I doubt if the East Germans have many athletes of Olympic calibre.”¹²⁹

In this letter, Brundage explicitly stated why the PRC and GDR should be denied Olympic recognition. The NOCs are not recognized by the IOC and few National Federations (NFs) are recognized by International Federations (IFs). Furthermore, the dues required to remain in Olympic standing were not paid since 1948. Brundage's reference to the “political factors” in the PRC and GDR entangled politics into the Olympic sphere, which insisted on remaining apolitical. By integrating political discourse into the IOC's decision-making, Brundage created political grounds to judge the Chinese and German questions.

In a letter from Brundage to Mayer, dated June 18, 1952, Brundage expressed how he believed that the “Olympic movement will be placed in jeopardy if we aren't careful.”¹³⁰ Brundage explained how he agreed with Edström's conclusion that, “The best thing is to reject them all until they comply with the rules.”¹³¹ Similar to the June 16th letter, Brundage reasoned

¹²⁹ Avery Brundage to Sigfrid Edström and Otto Mayer, June 16, 1952.

¹³⁰ Avery Brundage to Otto Mayer, June 18, 1952.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

why the GDR and PRC delegations couldn't compete at the XVth Olympiad. The reasoning is sound in that it complies with Olympic regulations. Both delegations could have been denied on the grounds that they were not recognized by the IOC and their NFs were not recognized by enough IFs. Political discourse and the pathos of the Olympic Ideal prolonged debates over Chinese and German participation.

Chapter VII: The German Question

Germany(s) at Oslo?

The IOC was privy to the German Question long before the China Question. The IOC was significantly more ignorant of the state of the PRC and ROC, the reasoning behind the immediate and continued confusion over China's entry into the Olympics.¹³² Germany had IOC representation, IOC Member Doctor Karl Ritter von Halt, who actively updated the IOC about Germany's changing circumstances and advocated for Olympic representation. In addition, Brundage, IOC VP, was fascinated by Germany and wanted Germany to be included in the Olympics immediately following World War II.¹³³ The IOC didn't know how to treat the GDR and FRG, both occupied zones following the war. The IOC granted the FRG provisional recognition to compete at the Oslo Winter Olympics in 1952. Without autonomy from the USSR, the GDR established an NOC to join the FRG in a united German team in Oslo.

The GDR NOC was established on April 22, 1951, in Berlin. In the announcement, the NOC stated that,

“This is the motivation that gives it the great responsibility of devoting its best efforts to creating, in cooperation with the National Olympic Committee of the

¹³² For example, the IOC misspelled “Peking” in over half of their correspondence. This paper will spell Peking in the correct spelling, even though many letters spelled it “Pekin.”

¹³³ Refer to the “Literature Review” section entitled, “Avery Brundage and his German Fixation” for additional information.

Federal Republic of Germany, a joint Olympic Committee for all of Germany. In this way, an important contribution to the unity of German sport is ensured. All duties assigned by the IOC to National Olympic Committees to promote the ideals of Olympism are carefully fulfilled.

The National Olympic Committee of the German Democratic Republic prepares everything necessary to ensure the participation of athletes from the German Democratic Republic in the Olympic Games.”¹³⁴

In April 1951, the GDR intended on creating a joint German team with the FRG. Even though, politically, the GDR and FRG were insistent on a divided Germany, the NOC of the GDR, still had the ambition to participate in the Olympics on a single team.

At the 45th Vienna IOC Session in May of 1951, Chancellor Mayer read a letter from the FRG that described East Germany’s ambition to find, “common ground in order to form a single committee for the entire German territory.”¹³⁵ During the Session, Poland’s IOC representative Dr. Loth proposed, “provisionally accepting the Olympic Committee of Democratic Germany, as was done for the Olympic Committee of the Federal Republic of Germany.”¹³⁶ Czechoslovakia’s representative Dr. Gruss urged, “the West German committee to join with the East German one.”¹³⁷ Alternatively, Denmark’s IOC representative Prince Axel proposed, “that the Helsinki Organizing Committee invite all of Germany.”¹³⁸ France’s IOC member Mr. Massard argued that the recognition of the East German Committee would, “immediately create a state of division, whereas our objective is precisely to unite the two German Olympic committees.”¹³⁹ Similarly, Switzerland’s Albert Mayer definitively said that, “it would be a mistake to recognize both

¹³⁴ German Democratic Republic National Olympic Committee to the International Olympic Committee, April 22, 1951.

¹³⁵ Otto Mayer, “Meeting Minutes,” (notes, 45th IOC Session, May 1951), Olympic Studies Centre.

¹³⁶ Alfred Loth, “Meeting Minutes,” (notes, 45th IOC Session, May 1951), Olympic Studies Centre.

¹³⁷ Josef Gruss, “Meeting Minutes,” (notes, 45th IOC Session, May 1951), Olympic Studies Centre.

¹³⁸ Prince Axel of Denmark, “Meeting Minutes,” (notes, 45th IOC Session, May 1951), Olympic Studies Centre.

¹³⁹ Armand Massard, “Meeting Minutes,” (notes, 45th IOC Session, May 1951), Olympic Studies Centre.

German committees, as they would then do nothing to reach agreement.”¹⁴⁰ The majority of the IOC members believed that the Germanies should unite under one flag, so as to not break the Olympic regulations. Finland’s IOC representative and OCOG President von Frenckell addressed the Session stating, “we must be able to invite all athletes of the world without exception.”¹⁴¹ He stated later in the Session that,

“‘The IOC brings together the youth of the world’; this is the basis of our Charter. The two German committees are seeking unification. We must help them in this task and make this known to them. If this objective were achieved, it would be a new victory for the Olympic Movement.”¹⁴²

As the OCOG of the 1952 Summer Olympics, Finland asserted its influence on the IOC to encourage inclusivity. The provisional agreement was reached that the East and West Germanies must formulate “a single German team” prior to the Helsinki Olympics.¹⁴³

While the consensus was to unite the two Germanies under one team, the only representative that advocated for the Germanies to be recognized separately was Mr. Adrianov, the USSR representative. He stated before the provisional agreement was made:

“We must realize that there are two German committees within a divided Germany. It would be a mistake to merge them under the domination of the West German committee; it would be fair to recognize each committee, thus placing them on an equal footing. If two German groups present themselves at the Helsinki Games, their strength will be divided and thus diminished. Recognizing the West German committee while ignoring the East German one amounts to ignoring a region of 22 million inhabitants.”¹⁴⁴

Adrianov’s opinion was rooted in the USSR’s stake in Eastern Germany. Following World War II and throughout the Cold War, the GDR was a Soviet satellite state. As part of the Eastern Bloc, behind the Iron Curtain, the GDR was key to the USSR’s expansion. If the IOC recognized two

¹⁴⁰ Albert Mayer, “Meeting Minutes,” (notes, 45th IOC Session, May 1951), Olympic Studies Centre.

¹⁴¹ Erik von Frenckell, “Meeting Minutes,” (notes, 45th IOC Session, May 1951), Olympic Studies Centre.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ “Meeting Minutes,” (notes, 45th IOC Session, May 1951), Olympic Studies Centre.

¹⁴⁴ Constantin Adrianov, (notes, 45th IOC Session, May 1951), Olympic Studies Centre.

Germanies, the GDR would receive individual recognition and status as a separate entity from the FRG and there would be more communist representation at the Games.

After the Lausanne Agreement

In a letter to Mayer from von Frenckell, dated May 24, 1951, recounting his trips to Prague and Berlin, von Frenckell explained how his proposal that only one German team should be represented at the Helsinki Olympics was accepted.

“With regard to a majority of votes in an olympic committee, and also in F.I.F.A., they promised not to mix politics in sports as far as the international competitions are concerned.

In addition they promised to accept all rules - both C.I.O. and F.I.F.A. rules. -

They will allow sportsmen from Eastern Germany to meet Western Germany sportsmen in all kinds of competitions and also invite the latter to East-Berlin.

I heard some rumours that the Government of West-Germany is against one German Olympic Committee.

I am sorry if politicians interfere with our sportsmens job.”¹⁴⁵

Von Frenckell pointed out that politics were interfering with the Olympic NOCs, however, he only alluded to the West Germans, FRG, being against a unified committee. The GDR since its establishment, stated its intentions to cooperate with the IOC to establish a united Olympic delegation.

The 45th IOC Session in May 1951 resulted in the Lausanne Agreement which committed both the FRG and GDR to creating a united delegation to be represented in Helsinki. Throughout the proceeding discussions with East and West Germany, West Germany was portrayed as the inviting and inclusive committee, even though in this letter von Frenckell heard that the West German government was against a unified German team. In the previous month, in April 1951, the GDR NOC stated its intention to join the FRG in a single unified German team at the Olympics. This letter from von Frenckell demonstrates how rather than the GDR that had

¹⁴⁵ Erik von Frenckell to Otto Mayer, May 24, 1951.

been portrayed as a villain for being an intrusive satellite delegation, it was the FRG delegation that was against the inclusion of the GDR. The FRG's hesitancy was understandable given that the GDR and FRG were divided immediately after World War II in opposition to one another.

However, to the IOC, the GDR was presented as the intruder because of the IOC's preceding recognition of the FRG delegation and longstanding German IOC Member Dr. von Halt.

In a letter addressed to von Frenckell from an IOC member that did not sign the letter, dated July 6, 1951:

“The Executive Committee of the IOC decided, by virtue of the full powers granted to it, that only one National Olympic Committee may be recognized in a country. Consequently, it is the West German Committee (which was recognized in Vienna) that is solely responsible to the IOC and to the Helsinki Organizing Committee for the application of the provisions of Article 25 of the Olympic Rules. Therefore, you and we deal, in everything relating to Germany as a whole (East and West), only with the West German Committee”

Furthermore, given the current technical impossibility of unification, the West German Committee has been required to take all useful steps immediately in order to present to the IOC session in Helsinki a proposal aimed at achieving a complete agreement between the two committees with a view to the creation of a single committee for all of Germany. The delegates from the East have already agreed to recognize Ritter von Halt as president of such a unified committee.

I also hope that there will be no complications concerning the affiliation of East German athletes with the national organizations of the West, since an athlete must be affiliated with a national federation—and thereby with the corresponding international federation—in order to take part in the Games. As far as I know, there are only two East German federations affiliated with the corresponding international federations.”¹⁴⁶

In a letter to Mayer from von Frenckell, dated December 10, 1951, von Frenckell outlined his German proposal,

“Both sides—West and East—accepted my proposal to form a committee composed of four representatives from the West and three from the East, under the presidency of Mr. Karl von Halt.

¹⁴⁶ IOC Member to Erik von Frenckell, July 6, 1951.

Then the West German delegates demanded that the East accept in writing that:

- politics be excluded,
- attacks in the press against the West German delegates cease, and
- the Lausanne Protocol be accepted.

If West Germany, through such a provocation, wishes to exclude the East, then the entire German representation will have to be re-examined in Oslo. No one knows what consequences this issue may lead to.”¹⁴⁷

Echoing its previous sentiments, the FRG, “demand[ed]” the GDR to abide by its requests, including barring politics from the delegation. The GDR, contrastingly, never made any demands of the FRG and accepted the Western German, IOC Member Dr. von Halt, as the president of the joint committee.

On February 9, 1952, it was reported that a “peace conference” between the IOC and the German committees in Helsinki wasn’t conducted because the East Germans arrived at 2:15 PM for the 10:30 AM meeting. According to *The New York Times* article, the West German delegates waited many hours “in vain” until 5:30 PM for the East Germans to appear.¹⁴⁸ The East Germans, reportedly, were surprised to see everyone gone and blamed the West Germans. GDR NOC President Edel stated that it was, “undemocratic of the Westerners to insist on meeting so soon after such a trip. Edel insisted the East Germans stand ready as always to accept any honorable cooperation with West Germany in the interest of Germany's young athletes.”¹⁴⁹ In the article, it was reported that the East Germans “preferred” to be represented in Helsinki as a unified team. One of the East German representatives, Mannfred Ewald, “accused West Germany of having broken the Lausanne agreement of last May under which East and West Germany were to unite under one team to represent Germany in the Olympics. He said the West German committee had

¹⁴⁷ Erik von Frenckell to Otto Mayer, December 10, 1951.

¹⁴⁸ *The New York Times*, “East Germans Seen Out of Games As Truce Effort Ends in Dispute,” (*The New York Times*, February 9, 1952).

¹⁴⁹ *The New York Times*, “East Germans Seen Out of Games,” 1952.

refused to give East Germans equal voice in Olympic arrangements.”¹⁵⁰ The GDR, although late, still attempted to reconcile to send one delegation to Helsinki. Ewald brought up an interesting argument, that the Lausanne Agreement was broken by the FRG, even though the FRG required the GDR to accept the Lausanne Agreement in writing on December 10, 1951.

Following the failed “peace conference,” the GDR appealed to Brundage, in a letter dated February 12, 1952, stating that,

“The NOC of the Federal Republic therefore has no influence on that as it is able to carry through its decisions only on the territory of the Federal Republic (Western Germany). When the affiliation of the West German NOC was decided it happened just without consulting the NOC of the German Democratic Republic.”¹⁵¹

The GDR reached out to the FRG for recognition, were ignored, and confronted Brundage in the hopes of the NOC being recognized. As Ewald alluded to February 9th, the West Germans didn’t allow the East Germans to be accurately represented and the Lausanne Agreement had been broken by the FRG, not the GDR.

IOC Decision on Helsinki

The official IOC decision made on February 11, 1952 in Oslo, stated that,

“In Western Germany, the National Olympic Committee is recognized by the IOC and also the national sport federations are recognized by their respective international federations, Since this is not the case in East Germany and since there can only be one Olympic Committee in each nation, the only way East German athletes can participate in the 1952 Olympic Games is by having their entries certified by the recognized German federations and the recognized German Olympic Committee.

¹⁵⁰ *The New York Times*, “East Germans Seen Out of Games,” 1952.

¹⁵¹ Olympic Committee of the German Democratic Republic to Avery Brundage, “Recognition Request of the NOC of the German Democratic Republic,” (February 12, 1952), Olympic Studies Centre.

The German team shall be selected at a special tryout held in the Olympic Stadium in Berlin and the best men shall be chosen regardless of whether they live in East or West Germany.

The German team shall march behind a mutually acceptable German flag.”¹⁵²

The IOC’s decision made the FRG the official German delegation. The only opportunity for East Germans to participate in the Olympics was by approval of West German NF’s and the German Olympic Committee controlled by Dr. von Halt and the FRG. The tryouts that the IOC mandated were to be held at the Olympic Stadium in Berlin, which was on the West German side. The East Germans, to participate in the Olympics, had to travel to West Germany and acquire approval from both the NF and the FRG NOC. This letter, dated February 11, 1952, was sent three days prior to the Opening Ceremonies in Oslo, for the Oslo Winter Olympics, and a German delegation was not sent.

Germany(s) at Helsinki

At the 47th IOC Session from July 14th to 18th, 1952, in Helsinki, the German Question was clarified. Edström stated at the Session that the, “[N.]O.C. of the East has refused categorically any collaboration with the West.”¹⁵³ The initial agreement was to create a united German Olympic team under IOC member Dr. von Halt, a West German, as President. In von Frenckell’s report to the IOC, he explained how, “All attempts of conciliation made by Helsinki have failed and the reasonable proposals submitted to the NOC of the East have been rejected. He proposes that we should recognized the NOC of the East as we have done in the case of the Saar.”¹⁵⁴ Von Frenckell intended to have the world represented in Helsinki; now that a unified team seems implausible, he advocated for the recognition of the East German NOC. Similar to

¹⁵² International Olympic Committee, (notes, 46th IOC Session, Oslo, Sweden, February 11, 1952).

¹⁵³ Sigfrid Edström, (notes, 47th IOC Session, July 14-18, 1952), Olympic Studies Centre.

¹⁵⁴ Erik von Frenckell, (notes, 47th IOC Session, July 14-18, 1952), Olympic Studies Centre.

the China Question, that recalled the inclusion of Saarland to defend recognized territories that didn't have national status, Edström stated, "In the past the IOC recognized Bohemia which was an integral part of the Austrian Empire also Finland which though self-governed was annexed to Russia, these two States had been considered as Olympic countries by the I.O.C."¹⁵⁵ What then, if territories in the past could be recognized, why couldn't the GDR, under the same principles? The recognition of Saarland created cascading effects; if Saarland could be approved, larger and more powerful territories like the GDR and the PRC should be granted recognition.

Kurt Edel, the President of the GDR NOC, in a letter addressed to the IOC, dated July 16, 1952, during the IOC Session in Helsinki, stated that the GDR's application should be approved and if Helsinki truly wants to recognize the world, that East Germany's 20 million people should be invited and recognized. In the letter, Edel claimed his NOC is "independent," "autonomous," and "amateur" with no mention of Soviet involvement.¹⁵⁶

In West German IOC Member Dr. Karl Ritter von Halt's report of "The German Question," he alluded to West Germany's efforts to include East Germany in the German Olympic Committee.

"The West German National Olympic Committee repeatedly tried to invite the East German amateurs to attend joint selective contests, which, however, was always refused by - the East German National Olympic Committee, I solemnly declare herewith that these invitations were always meant in earnest and that we never even thought of bringing the Eastern Zone into a state of dependence to us, We have yielded to everything they thought they had to demand in order to retain their independence; Their own management, umpires, uniforms, that they may send and lodge their people separately, in short, anything that could confirm them in their opinion that they are an independent National Olympic Committee. Before our selective contests began, we again appealed to the East German Olympic Committee and invited their active sportsmen to attend. As a reply we were told that the East German Olympic Committee does not want to be taken in "to by the West German Sports misery" and refuses to go to the start at the Olympic Games together with West German sportsmen. We sincerely regret that

¹⁵⁵ Sigfrid Edström, (notes, 47th IOC Session, July 14-18, 1952), Olympic Studies Centre.

¹⁵⁶ Kurt Edel to the International Olympic Committee, July 16, 1952.

our plan to send a joint team to the Olympic Games in Helsinki, has failed. The present meeting now has again to consider the motion of the East Zone that the National Olympic Committee of the German Democratic Republic be recognized independently. We West Germans wish to refrain from giving our opinion on this motion as it is entirely up to the IOC to decide whether or not a committee may be recognised. We have not to discuss about the participation. We sincerely regret that Germany has been split into two sporting parties and that even the most sincere and honest efforts have failed to unite these parts at least in a sports team.”¹⁵⁷

Dr. von Halt explained how his committee made honest efforts to include the East Germans.

However, Dr. von Halt was West German and previously a sporting official in Nazi Germany.

The East Germans may have been hesitant to participate with West German athletes. However,

on July 6, 1951, in a letter to von Frenckell, it was reported that the delegates of East Germany,

“agreed to recognize Ritter von Halt as president of such a unified committee.”¹⁵⁸ Additionally,

the joint tryouts were held at the 1936 Berlin Olympic Stadium, which was in West Germany.

Even though the tryouts were open to East German athletes, they were held on West German

soil. Later reports indicated that politics prevented neutral tryouts, resulting in only West

Germans being selected and represented at the XVth Olympiad. Considering the May 24, 1951,

letter from von Frenckell to Mayer, von Frenckell heard rumors in Berlin that the West German

government was against one German Olympic team. Additionally, considering the FRG had the

recognized NOC, an IOC member which was now President of the “joint” NOC, the Olympic

stadium, NFs, and considerably more pull with the IOC, the East German athletes were up

against too great of odds to achieve representation in Helsinki.

¹⁵⁷ Dr. Karl Ritter von Halt, “Report of Karl Ritter von Halt,” (IOC Session, July 18, 1952), Olympic Studies Centre.

¹⁵⁸ Letter to Erik von Frenckell, July 6, 1951.

Chapter VIII: The China Question

The China Question began with Finland's Organizing Committee mailing an invitation to China. Finland's OCOG goal was to "invite all athletes of the world without exception," and as such invited China, a NOC that hadn't been active or paid dues in four years.¹⁵⁹ In IOC Sessions, the PRC was referred to as Peking and the ROC was referred to as Formosa.¹⁶⁰ Formosa formed the China National Amateur Athletic Federation (CNAAF) and Peking formed the All-China Athletic Federation (ACAF), however both claimed to represent the rightful Chinese Olympic Committee. Formosa had a historical claim on the Chinese Olympic Committee name, as the former IOC recognized committee. The IOC mailing address for China was that of the China National Amateur Athletic Federation (CNAAF), the Chinese Olympic Committee, because it was previously IOC recognized. Helsinki's OCOG received an application from Formosa, in addition to an application from Peking. In a letter from Edström to Mayer, dated June 21, 1952, Edström addressed the mistake that allowed the opportunity for a "Chinese Question" to be created and then entertained by the IOC.

"... It is evidently a defence because the old China Athletic Federation in Peking has stated that they have been invited by the Organising Committee to take part in the games:

The invitation has naturally gone to the old Olympic Committee in Taiwan, Formosa, and somehow the organisation in Peking has received a copy of it and considers that they also have been invited. The whole troublesom Chinese question will be taken into consideration at the meeting of the I.O.C. in Helsinki."¹⁶¹

The clear answer that Brundage provided on June 16, 1952, to deny both Chinas, was complicated by the misunderstanding over the Chinese addresses that resulted in both Chinas believing they had been invited to the XVth Olympiad.

¹⁵⁹ Erik von Frenckell, "Meeting Minutes," (notes, 45th IOC Session, May 1951), Olympic Studies Centre.

¹⁶⁰ Also referred to as Nationalist and Democratic China throughout the IOC Sessions.

¹⁶¹ Sigfrid Edström to Otto Mayer, June 21, 1952.

In a letter from von Frenckell to Mayer, dated March 17, 1952, von Frenckell addressed the IOC regulations and the importance of the IOC to abide by them. He mentioned how the old Chinese NOC had been absent for four years and that it was the duty of the IOC to select a delegation.

“In my opinion these three members should be considered to have resigned since they have not, for four years, attended any meeting nor taken any active part in committee affairs.

At any rate the members of the IOC should belong to the national olympic committee if there is one; at least they should represent the IOC among the sportsmen in their own country. If they don't they are not entitled to represent anything. In my opinion the IOC must respect their own rules and not act according to their personal sympathies or anti-pathies.

Please send me the old address of the national olympic committee of China in Peking and please submit also a copy of the letter in which the address is changed from Peking to Taiwan.

Both national committees claim to be the successor of the old committee. We have to clear up which one has the juridical and moral right to it.”¹⁶²

The Finnish Organizing Committee attempted to make amends with the IOC after sending a letter to the incorrect location. The Finnish OCOG sent the invitation to the address that the IOC listed. The OCOG clearly didn't research the state of the Chinese NOC and it became apparent they didn't know about the Chinese Civil War's ramifications. However, the IOC still had the address listed and the OCOG, with the ambition to invite the world to Helsinki, sent the letter. The Finnish Organizing Committee and von Frenckell intended to invite the rightful Chinese team, however, the OCOG didn't know which one had the, “juridical and moral right to it,” because of their lack of knowledge on the context of the Chinese question.¹⁶³ During the July 16, 1952, IOC Session, von Frenckell stated, “that the Olympic Committee of Helsinki is nevertheless prepared to accept the candidature of these two Chinese teams, provided the I.F. and

¹⁶² Erik von Frenckell to Otto Mayer, March 17, 1952.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

the IOC recognize both parties.”¹⁶⁴ Finland’s Organizing Committee wasn’t wrapped up in politics nor the rightful NOC, but wanted to invite both to alleviate tension. Finland’s inclusive ambitions conflicted with IOC regulation; by having both Chinese teams represented at the Olympics, the Olympic rules would be violated.

At the July 14, 1952, IOC Session, von Frenckell, “lays stress upon the fact that his Committee adheres strictly to the Rules of the I.O.C but he hopes that both the I.O.C. and the I.F. will accept the participation of these two Chinese teams, as, by doing so, they will be giving proof of the true Olympic Spirit.”¹⁶⁵ Finland’s OCOG attempted to meld the Olympic Spirit with Olympic fine print. By appealing to the inclusivity of the Olympic Spirit which highlights togetherness and friendship, the official regulations become less salient. Von Frenckell, as the Finnish representative, advocated for the inclusion of both Chinese teams along the lines of the Olympic Spirit following the misunderstanding over the official invitation.

Chinese Olympic Recognition

Formosa was recognized by the IOC prior to the Chinese Civil War.¹⁶⁶ However, since 1948, “the International Federations have not heard from Nationalist China [Formosa], nor has she paid her dues since before the war.”¹⁶⁷ In order to remain in good standing with the IOC, each NOC must pay dues to the IOC. In a handwritten note, dated, “15/VI,” June 15th, signed by Edström, he writes, “Olympia Helsinki; No Chinese athletes may participate olympic games; Kindly notify both Taiwan and Peking.”¹⁶⁸ The following day, an official IOC “Notification

¹⁶⁴ Erik von Frenckell, (IOC Session, July 16, 1952), Olympic Studies Centre.

¹⁶⁵ Erik von Frenckell, (IOC Session, July 14, 1952), Olympic Studies Centre.

¹⁶⁶ International Olympic Committee, (IOC Session, July 14, 1952), Olympic Studies Centre.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Sigfrid Edström, (IOC Session, July 15, 1952), Olympic Studies Centre.

regarding China,” dated June 16, 1952, written by Edström, provides the IOC’s initial answer to the China Question,

“The members of the C.I.O.¹⁶⁹ to China have not taken active part in the olympic work for several years. The old Chinese Olympic Committee also called The National Amateur Athletic Federation now situated in Taiwan on Formosa has not taken part in any previous Olympic Games. Its standing as representative for the athletic movement in China is now being claimed by new sports organisations in Peking. These organisations seem to govern more than 95 per cent of the Chinese youth. The International Olympic Committee desires that the youth of China participates in the Olympic Games. At present the fundamental organisation and the rules of the C.I.O. prevent, however, this participation. It is the hope of the C.I.O. that the Chinese problem will be solved during the coming year. At present the two Chinese organisations - the one in Taiwan and the one in Peking- may not participate in the Olympic Games at Helsinki.”¹⁷⁰

A day later, the IOC became aware that the Chinese teams intended to travel to Helsinki, to make their case for IOC recognition. Gunsun Hoh, the Chinese Olympic Committee President (Formosa) and Chairman, in a letter addressed to Edström, dated July 31, 1952, refuted Edström’s decision to bar the Chinese National Olympic Committee, arguing that Edström exceeded his legal authority,

“you as President of the International Olympic Committee had no specific power and no specific authority to have issued such a peremptory and dictatorial order to the Chinese National Olympic Committee as you did on June 16, 1952 when you cabled us the following abrupt and insolent message: "You may not participate." I say you had no power, because the Charter contains no provision, express or implied, giving your office power to issue dictatorial order”¹⁷¹

The topic of the July 17, 1952, IOC Session was the request of Peking to be recognized by the IOC. A letter from Brundage to Edström, dated July 3, 1952, described how Hoh was traveling to Helsinki to present his case. Brundage wrote that Hoh, “claims that they were represented in London in 1948 and paid up their dues to the different federations at the time”¹⁷² The initial

¹⁶⁹ In the French language, the International Olympic Committee is abbreviated at “C.I.O” rather than “I.O.C.”

¹⁷⁰ Sigfrid Edström, International Olympic Committee, “Notification regarding China,” June 16, 1952.

¹⁷¹ Gunsun Hoh to Sigfrid Edström, July 31, 1952.

¹⁷² Avery Brundage to Sigfrid Edström, July 3, 1952.

conclusion of the IOC was that “Nationalist China (Formosa) has given no sign of life these last few years but for about two months ago. Because of this, the situation has become most perplexing, consequently the E.C. of the IOC, have decided that none of the Parties at stake could participate in the Helsinki Games.”¹⁷³ In succeeding IOC Sessions, representatives from Peking and Formosa refuted each other’s participation, entangling politics with the Olympic Movement, forcing the IOC to question its commitment to the Olympic Charter.

In his appeal to the IOC at the July 16th Session, Hoh, “reckons that his Committee is the only one which can be recognized by the I.O.C. The participation of the athletes of this committee to the 1952 Games is irrefutable.”¹⁷⁴ Sheng Chir Pai, Peking’s representative, stated that:

“Speaking in the name of 400 million inhabitants he demands that his Committee should be the sole Chinese organization to be recognized by the I.O.C. The Formosa Committee is composed of refugees and is, by no means, representing the Chinese Nation. The Olympic Committee of Peking is the reorganized institution in China and stands, beyond any doubt, for the authentic former Chinese O.C., He lodges a protest against Formosa having been issued with an invitation, and he asks for its immediate withdrawal from the Games, as well as the departure of the two refugee members, Messrs Eung and Wang.”¹⁷⁵

In a letter addressed to Mayer, dated August 3, 1952, Jung Kao-Tung, Vice President and Secretary General of the ACAF in Peking, stated that the ACAF was the only Chinese Olympic Committee and their representation in Helsinki was irrefutable. He addressed the political nature of the IOC’s decision:

“The inclusion of Taiwan completely runs counter to the spirit and Charter of the International Olympic Games. In order to maintain the dignity and principles of the International Olympic Committee, I resolutely demand that the sports organization and representatives of the remnant Kuomintang bloc in Taiwan, long discarded by the Chinese people and honest people the world over, be expelled from the International Olympic Committee, the International Olympic Games and related international federations. I also demand that the All China Athletic

¹⁷³ International Olympic Committee, (IOC Session, July 14, 1952), Olympic Studies Centre.

¹⁷⁴ Gunsun Hoh, (IOC Session, July 16, 1952), Olympic Studies Centre.

¹⁷⁵ Sheng Chir Pai, (IOC Session, July 16, 1952), Olympic Studies Centre.

Federation as the Chinese Olympic Committee be accorded its rightful place in all the international Olympic bodies and organizations.”¹⁷⁶

Both Formosa and Peking’s representatives approached the IOC with political claims and insisted on their country’s recognition along with the denial of the other. The IOC attempted to act neutrally, even though the Chinese question began and endured because of inter-Chinese politics.

In a letter to von Frenckell from Edström, dated June 17, 1952, Edström spoke on the invitations of the Chinese delegations and how the “Chinese Olympic Committee in Peking states that they have been invited by the Finnish Organizing Committee and are going to participate in Helsinki. Somehow they have persuaded our member in Shanghai, Mr. Shou Yi Tung, to support their application.”¹⁷⁷ As previously mentioned, the leaders of the Formosa NOC were Shou Yi Tung and Gunsun Hoh. Edström didn’t know how Peking obtained Tung’s signature, but one paper reported his suspected imprisonment or death by Peking about a month later. A newspaper article from Springfield College, dated July 24, 1952, reads that, “Last week a story from Helsinki, Finland, about the withdrawal of the nationalist Chinese from the Olympic Games seemed to confirm fears for the safety of Shou Yi Tung. Their leader, Gunsun Hoh, another Springfield College student, and a friend of Shou Tung, said he had been killed or imprisoned by the Reds and his name forged to their application for admission to the games.”¹⁷⁸ While the Olympics are presented as bi-annual entertainment, blood could have been shed over the entry of the Peking Olympic delegation. The IOC didn’t investigate how Tung’s signature was acquired, enabling Peking to proceed with their Olympic ambitions.

¹⁷⁶ Jung Kao-Tung to Otto Mayer, August 3, 1952.

¹⁷⁷ Sigfrid Edström to Erik von Frenckell, June 17, 1952.

¹⁷⁸ “The Fate of Mr. Tung,” (Springfield Union, July 24, 1952).

En Route to Helsinki

In a telegram from Edström to Finland's OCOG, dated June 17, 1952, it states, "Your three telegrams to me Lausanne and Helsinki received stop¹⁷⁹ no chinese athletes may participate olympic games Helsinki stop ask Shou Yi Tung [Formosa] explain to you articles 25 and 45 Olympic Rules stop your olympic committee not yet recognized stop useless travel to Helsinki."¹⁸⁰ In the 47th IOC Session on July 14, 1952, in Helsinki, the IOC got information, "that the Peking China's athletes are actually in Leningrad, ready to compete in the Games should the matter be satisfactorily settled. As to the athletes of Formosa, a team of 27 competitors is actually on its way to Helsinki."¹⁸¹ Prior to gaining IOC approval, both Chinese teams were making their way west. The physical proximity of the PRC delegation, staying with the Soviet team in Leningrad, justified the IOC's fears of politics bleeding into the Olympic Games and surmounted pressure and urgency on the IOC to grant both China's recognition as exceptional cases. Previous scholarship clearly illustrates the influence of Soviet athletic systems and leadership on the PRC athletic team. The PRC officials were motivated to join their "socialist brothers" at the Olympics.¹⁸² This reference to the PRC athletes staying in Leningrad illustrates how much communication and cooperation there was between the PRC and USSR delegations leading up to the Olympics.

IOC Consciousness

In the aforementioned June 16, 1952, letter from Brundage to Edström, Brundage admitted the IOC's recent leniency with IOC regulations. He explained that,

¹⁷⁹ The "stop" is typical for telegrams.

¹⁸⁰ Sigfrid Edström to the Finnish Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games, June 17, 1952.

¹⁸¹ International Olympic Committee, (notes, IOC Session, July 14, 1952), Olympic Studies Centre.

¹⁸² Fan Hong and Lu Zhouxiang, *Representing the new China and the Sovietisation of Chinese sport (1949–1962)*, (The International Journal of the History of Sport, 2012).

“We have been far too lenient in the past in giving recognition to organizations that are not known to us. We should probably lay down a procedure to be followed in the future. The Constitution and By-Laws should be studied and we should have a history of activities of all organizations that seek membership, to be sure that their objectives have neither commercial or political significance.”¹⁸³

At the July 18th, during the 47th Session, on the topic of the Chinese dispute, Brundage made the following statement:

“On July 18, 1952, during the IOC 47th Session, Avery Brundage, IOC Vice President, made the following statement: In order to avoid all misunderstanding, it is necessary to specify that the I.O.C. does not recognize any Chinese National Olympic Committee, On the other hand, whilst we are breaking our Rules, we do so, inspired by sympathetic feelings toward the Chinese athletes who are on their way to Helsinki, The I.O.C. authorizes them to participate to the Games of the XVth Olympiad held at Helsinki. This decision must not be misinterpreted, it is not opening a precedent, it is but an exceptional decision.”¹⁸⁴

Granting the Chinese delegations' recognition on the grounds of exceptional circumstances became complicated by a parallel dispute between the two Germanys. The IOC was conscious of considering the ramifications of recognizing the German and Chinese NOCs. In a letter from Brundage to Edström, dated June 12, 1952, he stated:

“Certainly we cannot throw out our old Chinese members as long as they are organized and have control of a country as large as Formosa. The most that we can do would be to recognize both and this, of course, we have refused to do in the case of Germany. The whole situation is most difficult and it is too bad that we can't get through the next two months without taking a stand since, as you say, in the next four years the conditions may change.”¹⁸⁵

At the 47th IOC Session, French IOC member Armand Massard, on the EC, stated that,

“China's situation is identical to the one which prevails in Germany, To his way of thinking, no possible decision can be reached before the problem of the diplomatic and political relations can be solved. It is obvious that we have no

¹⁸³ Avery Brundage to Sigfrid Edström, June 16, 1952.

¹⁸⁴ Avery Brundage, (IOC 47th Session, Palais de la Noblesse, Helsinki, Finland, June 18, 1952).

¹⁸⁵ Avery Brundage to Sigfrid Edström, June 12, 1952.

other alternative but to maintain our relationship with the Chinese of Formosa, who, alone, have for years past, been recognized by us.¹⁸⁶

The IOC clarified its intention to maintain amicable relations with Formosa because it was a previous NOC, which then left the decision on Peking undecided. Peking, because of its affiliation with the USSR, and its communist commitments, was perceived as part of the Eastern Bloc of satellite states to IOC members. Massard pointed to the necessity of the Chinese delegations to resolve “political and diplomatic” problems. Massard entangled political uncertainty into the IOC’s decision-making process, tying the political state of the PRC to its Olympic status. If the PRC was democratically inclined and aligned with the United States rather than the USSR, like Formosa, would the IOC be as critical of their political relations? It appears unlikely, given the IOC applied similar criticism to the GDR, a Soviet satellite state.

Additionally, in the lead up to the IOC’s decision on China, Swiss IOC member Albert Mayer¹⁸⁷ recalled that, “the I.O.C. has recognized the Saar [for this Olympics] which is not an independent State.”¹⁸⁸ The disputed territory of Saarland, between France and Germany, was granted Olympic recognition even though it wasn’t an independent state nor did it have traditional “sporting borders” that grounded the IOC’s prior decisions to grant other territories recognition.¹⁸⁹ The IOC’s inconsistent leniency appears to be politically motivated, when comparing the Saar to the Chinese and German questions.

IOC Decision

Edström, at the 47th Session provided IOC members with two voting options regarding the Chinese Question.

¹⁸⁶ Armand Massard, (47th IOC Session, Palais de la Noblesse, Helsinki, Finland, July 14, 1952).

¹⁸⁷ This is not to be confused with Otto Mayer the IOC Chancellor. Otto and Albert are brothers and both served as IOC members at the same time.

¹⁸⁸ Albert Mayer, (47th IOC Session, Palais de la Noblesse, Helsinki, Finland, July 16-18, 1952).

¹⁸⁹ Refer to the “Literature Review” section entitled, “The Case of Saarland” for more information.

“One is to recognize both Chinas in view of the fact that several I.F. have already recognized the Peking Committee, The other solution would be to recognize Formosa only, as it represents the only Committee acknowledged by us. The President holds the view that we should accept either, both Committees or none.”¹⁹⁰

According to Edström, “The E.C. has taken the decision to suggest to the Session not to authorize either Chinese party to participate to the Games, should it be representative of Formosa or Peking.”¹⁹¹ However, over the duration of the 47th Session, IOC members repeatedly pointed to Formosa’s preceding IOC recognition. The primary obstacle preventing China’s recognition was the aforementioned rule only allowing one NOC per nation. Albert Mayer stated:

“We must apply our Set Rules, Art. 10 and 25, which stipulate that there can only be one Olympic Committee per country. On the other hand, if the I.O.C. admits the existence of two distinct governments in China, he thinks that the two parties at stake should be allowed to participate to the Games, The main thing is not to break our Olympic Rules. (7) (16-18)

Formosa Committee has been recognized by the I.O.C. it cannot be excluded from the Games. If we take strictly the sportive and Olympic standpoint applying art« 1 of our fundamental set of Rules and Regulations, we can authorize the Peking Committee's participation to the Games. The Helsinki's Organizing Committee has been studying the Chinese question thoroughly for the last six months and has reached the conclusion that the athletes selected by both committees should be allowed to take part to the Games. (16-18)” (47) He ends his statement by saying that “Finally, we must ignore all matters connected with racial, religious or political questions and apply the ideal which we serve ; namely to bring together the youth of the world. (8)(16-18)”¹⁹²

The IOC members did not ignore political matters leading up to this decision. Repeatedly, in Sessions and in official correspondence, members mentioned the politics of having “Red China” represented at the Olympics. The United States supported Formosa and it didn’t receive political criticism even though it had been absent from IOC affairs since 1948. The legacy recognition of Formosa was the sole objective claim to recognizing Formosa over Peking. The IOC justified the

¹⁹⁰ Sigfrid Edström, (47th IOC Session, Palais de la Noblesse, Helsinki, Finland, July 16-18, 1952).

¹⁹¹ Sigfrid Edström, (47th IOC Session, Palais de la Noblesse, Helsinki, Finland, July 16-18, 1952).

¹⁹² Albert Mayer, (47th IOC Session, Palais de la Noblesse, Helsinki, Finland, July 16-18, 1952).

rejection of Peking by referring to Olympic regulations. In reference to Edström's aforementioned statement, the decision wasn't between one China or the other, it was either both or neither. The votes tallied with 22 votes for neither team to participate and 29 votes for both teams to participate. Both Chinese teams were allowed to participate in the Helsinki Games. Peking, hearing the news on July 18, 1952, the eve of the Opening Ceremony, was only able to have one athlete compete. Peking and the PRC state hailed the PRC's presence on the Olympic stage as a national victory.

Formosa Withdrawal

Following the decision, Formosa withdrew from the Olympics in protest stating in their official letter dated July 17, 1952:

"The decision [of the IOC] has therefore broken the fine tradition of Olympic games based on the principles of fairness and strict observance of rules. As a protest against such an unlawful decision, the Chinese National Olympic Committee decides to withdraw from the 1952 games and reserves all its rights under the Charter of the Olympic Games in its capacity as the only legal and recognized national Olympic committee of China."¹⁹³

Beyond the choice not to compete alongside communists, Formosa protested the unlawful decision of the IOC to allow both delegations breaking Article 1 of the Olympic Charter. The IOC knowingly broke Article I, sidelining Formosa's preceding IOC status, and permitted both Olympic delegations to compete in Helsinki. In Gunsun Hoh's July 31, 1952, letter to Edström, he stated that,

"I.O.C. at its plenary session on July 17, 1952 committed another error when it adopted a compromise resolution allowing both the Chinese National Olympic Committee and a Chinese communist group to take part in the Helsinki games. Such a resolution is illegal and has formed the subject of a protest which I have previously communicated to you. What I would like to point out here is that the

¹⁹³ Gunsun Hoh to the International Olympic Committee, (Official Withdrawal), July 17, 1952.

resolution, illegal as it is in itself, constitutes a de facto repudiation of your dictatorial order to us, as it restores our right of participation in the Helsinki games.

Had your order been right and lawful, the I.O.C. session would have legalized it by ratification, as it should have done according to the provisions of the Charter... As a violation of the Charter, the resolution is ipso facto null and void.”¹⁹⁴

Hoh ended the letter by alluding to the Helsinki Games future consequences,

“But with profound regret I must say 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. Your action and the I.O.C. decision have created a grave precedent which will vitiate the confidence of the world in the I.O.C. as the supreme and law-abiding body in international sports, When the hurly-burly of the Helsinki games is done, world opinion in a calmer atmosphere will better be able to judge the rights and wrongs of the series of events and see what fateful consequences they will entail to the future of world Olympics.”¹⁹⁵

Hoh demonstrated, very clearly, the dangerous precedent the IOC was setting by allowing the Peking delegation to compete at the Games. By granting Peking’s inclusion as an exceptional circumstance, an opening was created for future disputed territories to apply for Olympic recognition because Article I was ignored. Additionally, during the same Olympics, the IOC granted exceptional circumstances to multiple other NOCs along the lines of the Olympic Spirit rather than Article 1 of the Olympic Charter.

Chapter IX: Finland’s Commitment to the Olympics

Von Frenckell and the OCOG’s determination to “invite the youth of the world” and the Finns ability to accommodate the largest Olympics in the smallest host city, enabled the Olympics to witness record-breaking success. A record 69 nations were represented in Helsinki, totaling 4,925 athletes. With 13 NOC debuts, one short of the Olympic record of 14 debuts,

¹⁹⁴ Gunsun Hoh to Sigfrid Edström, July 31, 1952.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

which was set on the occasion of the first modern Olympic Games in 1896, the Helsinki Olympics were the most inclusive and diverse Olympics in the 20th century. The Games featured a new high of 149 events where 115 Olympic records were either broken or tied and nearly a dozen world records were set. The Helsinki Olympics held the record for most world records broken at a single Olympics until the 2008 Beijing Games. Following the Games, the Helsinki Olympics were globally celebrated for breaking records in the number of participants, events, and nations that competed.

Finland remained committed to the Olympic Movement since its inclusion in the Olympics in 1906 and was perhaps the most committed to the Olympic Spirit in 1952. During the opening speech of the 47th Session of the IOC in 1952, President Edström began by saying, “One of the most Olympic minded countries in the world is Finland. The Olympic sentiment [is] in the heart of the Finnish people. On behalf of the International Olympic Committee, I wish to on this occasion to thank the Finnish people for its love of Olympism.”¹⁹⁶ In the “Helsinki Capital of Finland: The Olympic Host 1952,” booklet published by the OCOG in 1952, the OCOG began by addressing the reader, primarily tourists enroute to Helsinki, writing, “we hope that the reader will see in it an expression of the Finnish people’s ardent desire to make the Games into a true festival of sport.”¹⁹⁷ The introduction to the booklet ends with stating that, “Helsinki will spare no effort to justify the trust put in it when the honour of organizing the Olympic Games of 1952 was awarded it, and Helsinki hopes to be able to prove itself worthy of the Olympic ideal.”¹⁹⁸ The OCOG underpinned Finland’s commitment to the Olympic Movement. The OCOG argued that “the Finnish nation came to the fore during the uneasy

¹⁹⁶ Sigfrid Edström, (47th IOC Session, Palais de la Noblesse, Helsinki, Finland, July 16-18, 1952).

¹⁹⁷ “Helsinki Capital of Finland: The Olympic Host 1952,” (Finnish Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games, 1952), Olympic Studies Centre.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

political situation at the beginning of the century, sport became one of the strongest expressions of Finnish national feeling.”¹⁹⁹ The OCOG added that, “Finland is a sporting country, and the Olympic athletes have always held the admiration of the whole nation. In order to send Finland's athletes to the Olympic games even the poorest contribute.”²⁰⁰

The entire Finnish population was committed to the Olympic Movement and to seeing Finland represented on the world stage. Finland requested to host the Olympics as early as 1915 and when hosting the Olympics came into fruition for Finland for the 1952 Olympics, Finland organized it in strict accordance with the Olympic Spirit. The Finnish OCOG and the Finnish population fought to include and accommodate the world, despite the IOC wavering in its adherence to the Olympic Spirit. The Finnish state's pursuit of neutrality was demonstrated through the Paasikivi-Kekkonen Line. At the beginning of the Cold War, Finland's steadfast commitment enabled the world to meet on neutral ground in Helsinki. The OCOG invited the world, regardless of IOC recognition, and followed through to proclaim the Ancient Olympic Truce “Ekekheiria” in the Olympic Stadium. Countries recently at war and currently engaged in the Cold War, came together in Finland in celebration of the Olympic Movement.

Finnish OCOG Success

The Finnish Organizing Committee published “Finland: The Country of the XV Olympic Games” in 1952, outlining the goals of the OCOG:

“The Finnish Organizing Committee would like its guests to accept this book as a memory of Finland and its people. Finland is proud of being chosen to organize the 1952 Olympic Games and welcomes sportsmen from all over the world to friendly competition in its stadium... The Finnish Organizing Committee hopes that our foreign visitors will have time to get to know some aspects of the life of our country, which in the summer of 1952 formed a bridge between the nations of

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

the world and that they will realize that even a small country can help in creating a better world.”²⁰¹

The book, compiled for tourists, illuminates how friendly competition and peace were paramount to the Finnish OCOG. Published alongside the book, the OCOG published the “Official Guide XV Olympiad Helsinki 1952,” which welcomed the world to Helsinki and states, “We hope that you walk around in our city and visit all the places which are of interest to you. Every inhabitant in Helsinki will be ready to help you and guide you in your problems.”²⁰² By hosting a neutral Olympics in the geographical buffer nation between East and West, Finland effectively promoted world peace for the 16 days of Olympic competition. In an article from *The New York Times* covering the Opening Ceremonies, dated July 19, 1952, Allison Danzig described how,

“The little nation that paid its debt²⁰³ and stood unafraid once again to command the applause of the world... The achievement of this nation of 4,000,000 after suffering the ravages and economic depletion of two wars and heavy indemnity payments, in setting the stage for this gigantic undertaking has won the admiration of the vanguard of a hundred thousand visitors coming here from the world over... Finland, with the citizens of Helsinki sacrificing and cooperating to make their guests comfortable, has routed those skeptics who said so small a city was unthinkable as a venue of the Olympic Games.”²⁰⁴

Finland hosted the Olympics on neutral soil, even though Finland was recently devastated by war and burdened by reparations as a result of Finland’s conflicts with the USSR. In the report on the “Preparations for the Celebration of the XVth Olympic Games Helsinki 1952,” published by the OCOG in July 1951, von Frenckell described how, “the Olympic spirit did not wane in Finland [after the Olympic planning gap because of World War II].... Helsinki will do

²⁰¹ “Finland: The Country of the XV Olympic Games,” (Finnish Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games, 1952), Olympic Studies Centre.

²⁰² “Official Guide XV Olympiad Helsinki 1952,” (Finnish Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games, 1952), Olympic Studies Centre, 5.

²⁰³ This is in reference to Finland being the only nation to fully repay its war-related debts to the United States after World War I.

²⁰⁴ Allison Danzig, “Ancient Ceremony Today to Open Olympic Games for 70 Nations at Helsinki,” (*The New York Times*, July 19, 1952).

its best to assemble the youth of the world in peaceful competition and fulfil the directives conceived by Pierre de Coubertin, creator of the modern games.”²⁰⁵ The Finnish OCOG celebrated Pierre de Coubertin and remained faithful to his Olympic philosophy throughout the tenure of planning the Games.

Finland versus Executive Committee

The Finnish OCOG’s largest obstacle from achieving full adherence to the Olympic Spirit was Cold War politics complicating IOC decision-making. The IOC and Finland disagreed throughout the Olympic planning process over Finland inviting nations not yet recognized by the IOC, against Olympic protocol. An additional case of conflict was recorded in a series of letters between von Frenckell, Brundage, and Edström, key members of the Executive Committee (EC). The Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games, every Olympics, must pay a fee to the secretary of the IOC to host the Olympics. In 1948, London’s OCOG paid 5,000 sterling pounds to host the 1948 London Olympics. Von Frenckell made a gentleman's agreement with Edström in July of 1948 to pay 2,500 sterling pounds to host the 1952 Games in Helsinki. Edström, following the meeting with von Frenckell, in 1948, raised the price to 3,000 sterling pounds to host the Games in Helsinki, 1,000 pounds in advance and 2000 after the conclusion of the Games. The Finnish OCOG paid 1,000 sterling pounds in March of 1950. In a letter from Edström and Mayer to von Frenckell, dated May 27, 1950, Edström stated that he, “unfortunately did not mention the sum in Swiss money”²⁰⁶ during the July 1948 agreement and added in a letter dated June 16, 1950, “that nobody can expect the IOC to live without money.”²⁰⁷ Edström requested the Finnish OCOG pay, “3000 pounds in Swiss currency equal to the exchange

²⁰⁵ Erik von Frenckell, “Preparations for the Celebration of the XVth Olympic Games Helsinki 1952,” (Finnish Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games, July 1951), Olympic Studies Centre.

²⁰⁶ Sigfrid Edström and Otto Mayer to Erik von Frenckell, May 27, 1950.

²⁰⁷ Sigfrid Edström to Erik von Frenckell, June 16, 1950.

between sterling and Swiss Francs in July 1948.²⁰⁸ The conversion would amount to 52,500 Swiss Francs. Edström insisted on the exchange rate from July 1948, where one pound was equivalent to 17.50 Swiss Francs, because of the dramatic devaluation, 30.5% reduction, of the English sterling pound by September 1949.²⁰⁹ Von Frenckell called out this change, stating that, “If the secretary of the IOC preferred in August 1948 to get Swiss Francs, why did they ask for payment from the London Organizing Committee in sterling?”²¹⁰ He again, questioned the EC’s reasoning arguing, “Was somebody informed about a devaluation of the pound sterling which was to occur five months later (from July 1948)?”²¹¹ The EC began asking for Swiss Francs for the first time in May of 1950, at the Copenhagen IOC Session, two years after the gentleman's agreement, and after Finland had paid the initial fee of 1000 sterling pounds. Finland denied Edström’s letter, regarding the switch from sterling pounds to Swiss Francs, and von Frenckell added that, “I refused to accept the letter because in the letter was mentioned that if Finland would not pay the sum and some American cities were prepared to do it, **the question of turning the XVth olympic games from Helsinki to an American city should be brought up in the congress.**”²¹²²¹³ Edström, by way of an ultimatum, threatened the Finnish OCOG to pay the new fee or give up hosting the Olympics in Helsinki. Quoting Brundage in von Frenckell’s letter to Brundage, dated December 30, 1950, von Frenckell stated that, “I am very glad... that you ‘do not need an attorney and need no more argument... Now if the original payment had been specified in English pounds and the pound has been subsequently devalued it would have been

²⁰⁸ Sigfrid Edström to Erik von Frenckell, July 24, 1950.

²⁰⁹ Alain Naef, “The 1949 Devaluation: Readjusting the Post-War Parities,” Chapter. In *An Exchange Rate History of the United Kingdom: 1945–1992*, 18–34. Studies in Macroeconomic History. (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2022).

²¹⁰ Erik von Frenckell to Avery Brundage, December 30, 1950.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² Erik von Frenckell is referring to the Olympic Congress.

²¹³ Erik von Frenckell to Avery Brundage, December 30, 1950.

our loss and not yours and there would be no argument.”²¹⁴ Brundage’s opinion was more neutral than Edström’s, who threatened to switch the host city to garner more profit for the IOC.

However, there is a record of Brundage fighting for the Olympics to be held in the United States in 1952 and in 1940. In the same letter to Brundage, von Frenckell put it bluntly, “Finland has never tried to make business out of the Games and was, therefore, prepared to help the IOC.”²¹⁵

Von Frenckell signed off the letter by stating that, “With kind regards in a true olympic spirit, I am, sincerely yours” and signs his name.²¹⁶ Von Frenckell, after disputing the IOC’s attempt to raise the price of hosting the Olympics, signed off by referencing the Olympic Spirit, which he and his OCOG attempted to plan the Olympics in accordance with.

This conflict between EC and OCOG didn’t prevent Finland from hosting a successful Olympics. Additionally, following the Games, Brundage stated on August 14, 1952, that,

“The Games of the 15th Olympiad in Helsinki were by far the greatest Games ever held, a tremendous success from every point of view, and our Finnish friends can be proud of the excellent facilities, the efficient management, and the gracious hospitality they offered to the sportsmen of the world. Everyone present, competitors, officials, and spectators left with renewed faith in humanity, and a revived hope for a peaceful world.”²¹⁷

Brundage, giving this speech now as the President of the IOC, praised Finland for its achievements, even though he fought against Finland’s efforts of inclusivity persistently, prior to the Games. Finland even bestowed the honor of Order of the Lion of Finland, Commander First Class to Brundage in 1969. Additionally, in a letter from Frenckell to Chancellor Otto Mayer, dated February 16, 1952, Frenckell reported that,

“Some members of the Parliament in Sweden and Finland have proposed the Nobel World’s Peace Committee to give the 1953 year’s award to the IOC, for

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

²¹⁷ Avery Brundage, (speech, August 14, 1952).

their international work. The sum corresponds to 150,000 crowns. I am glad that the IOC Congress of the 17th of July confirmed the right of the organizers of the XVth Olympic Games to invite the youth of the whole world!”²¹⁸

The Finnish and Swedish governments granted the IOC the credit for creating a peaceful and inclusive Olympics by nominating the IOC for a Nobel Peace Prize. The IOC did not win this award. However, if the Nobel Peace Committee were to consult the documentation between the OCOG and the IOC over the debuts of China, Germany, or the USSR, it would be Finland that would be bestowed the honor of a Nobel Peace Prize. It was the OCOG, the Finnish government, and the Finnish people who rallied together around hosting the Olympics in accordance with the Olympic Spirit. Finland hosted the largest and one of the most successful Olympics at the time, despite the IOC’s efforts to derail Finnish inclusion and hosting efforts.

Finland’s Olympic Legacy

In a speech by von Frenckell in September 1954, he thanked the people and organizations responsible for planning such a successful Olympics. Von Frenckell stated that, “Recurrent have been the word »success» and references to an organisatory and sporting victory. If there are real grounds for speaking of a complete success, the honours are due to the Finnish people.”²¹⁹ He ended his speech by adding, “Finally, I thank the entire Finnish nation for the helpfulness and skill shown in the promotion of a common cause.”²²⁰ Hosting the Olympics was a united national effort from Finland; Finns not only opened their homes but advocated for the world’s participation. IOC Chancellor Mayer, in a letter to Arnaldo Guinle, a founding member of Brazil’s NOC member, dated September 10, 1952, explained the success of the Games and how, “Our Finnish friends deserve unlimited credit for the excellent facilities, the efficient

²¹⁸ Erik von Frenckell to Otto Mayer, February 16, 1952.

²¹⁹ Erik von Frenckell, (speech, September 1954)

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

management and the gracious hospitality which they extended to the sportsmen of the world. A fine Olympic spirit prevailed.”²²¹ Finland received recognition from the entire world following the Olympics for its record-breaking success and neutral nature. Dr. Paul M. Limbert, former president of Springfield College and world Secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association in 1952, said in 1952 that,

“There have been critics who question the value of [the] Olympic Games from the standpoint of international understanding. From this angle perhaps the 1952 Olympics are the most significant ever held. In the midst of a 'cold war' there was not a single incident of friction between representatives of countries on opposite sides of the 'iron curtain... The thousands of pigeons that soared into the rainy sky the day of the opening ceremonies at Helsinki, did, indeed, seem to be 'harbingers of peace.'”²²²

Dr. Limbert's opinion was echoed by the press throughout the world following the Olympic Games. It seemed the unanimous opinion that Finland had just orchestrated a 16-day miracle of world peace. This success wasn't coincidental, it was carefully organized and intentional decisions were made to remain faithful to the Olympic Spirit. This Olympic anomaly becomes even more impressive when considering the time in which it took place and the political entanglements of the IOC. Despite heightened political tensions, the world was able to participate in a peaceful Olympics on neutral soil. Finland, for its efforts, also repositioned itself on the world stage as an independent neutral nation. Peace conferences began being held in Finland after the Games. Finland, as the geographical bridge between the East and West, brought the world together during the Cold War by hosting one of the most successful Olympics to date. The XVth Olympiad was a crucial event in the reconstruction of Finland's post-war identity and its reassertion as a neutral nation on the world stage.

²²¹ Otto Mayer to Arnaldo Guinle, September 10, 1952.

²²² Dr. Paul M. Limbert, (speech, Springfield College, 1952) from Finland Olympic Committee Book. (Finnish Organizing Committee, 1952). Olympic Studies Centre, Lausanne.

Chapter X: Conclusion

A Final Anecdote: Paavo Nurmi

Throughout this thesis, it has been argued that the astounding success of the 1952 Helsinki Olympics should be attributed to Finland's commitment to the Olympic Spirit which outweighed the political entanglements of the IOC. From inviting the world to proclaiming the Ancient Olympic Truce, the 1952 Helsinki Olympics was a triumph of scale, inclusivity, and togetherness. Finland, as a physical bridge between East and West, brought the world together for 16 days in the beginning of the Cold War. The story of Paavo Nurmi, Finland's best-known Olympian, encompassed Finland's adoration and commitment to the Olympic Movement despite the IOC.

Paavo Nurmi, a middle to long distance runner, won nine gold medals and three silver medals during the 1920, 1924, and 1928 Olympics. Nurmi followed the success of Hannes Kolehmainen, who won three gold medals in the 1912 Olympics in long distance running. The pair of runners were responsible for "running Finland onto the map" of the world stage with their Olympic victories. During his first Olympics, during the 1920 Antwerp Games, Nurmi broke the world record for the mile, 5000 meters and 10,000 meters, a feat which no-one has done before or since 1920. During the 1924 Paris Olympics, Nurmi won the 1500 and the 5000 meters with less than two hours between the two finals. Nurmi is the most successful Olympic long-distance runner in history, winning him nicknames like "The Flying Finn," and the "Phantom Finn."²²³ The runner coming in second to Nurmi is Emil Zátopek who won the 5,000 meters, 10,000 meters, and marathon within eight days at the 1952 Helsinki Olympics. It was in Finland where Zátopek was awarded three gold medals, following Nurmi on his home soil.

²²³ "Life Story," (Paavo Nurmi, The Official Site of the Flying Finn), (The Sports Museum of Finland, n.d.).

After dominating the 1920s, Nurmi looked to the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics to win the marathon, as Hannes Kolehmainen did in 1920. In 1932, Nurmi was banned from international competition, including the Olympics Games, by the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF). Nurmi was branded as a “professional” athlete for receiving small sums for running two exhibition foot-races in the Fall of 1931.²²⁴

All the familiar and notorious IOC characters from the 1952 Olympics were integral to the “Nurmi Affair.” Sigfrid Edström, the IOC President in 1952, was the IAAF President in 1932; key to this case, Edström was also Swedish. Avery Brundage, the Vice President of the IOC in 1952, was the President of the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) in 1932. Dr. Karl Ritter von Halt led the German Athletics Association. Brundage and Dr. von Halt were on the Board of the IAAF. Additionally, Urho Kekkonen, the Prime Minister of Finland in 1952, to be elected president in 1956, served as the chairman of the Finnish Athletics Association (SUL) in 1932.

The IAAF suspended Nurmi, in April 1932, for violating amateur regulations. Edström was the clear leader in this decision. Both Edström and Brundage were amateur fundamentalists, committed to ridding the Olympics of professional athletes to save the sanctity of sport. However, the IAAF lacked evidence and assumed the Finns would submit to the IAAF. However, Nurmi was a national hero and Kekkonen, as the chairman of SUL, refused to accept the IAAF’s decision.

Following the decision, “Edström became the most hated person in Finland; in principle he bore the brunt of the Finnish dissatisfaction alone.”²²⁵ As the president of the IAAF, but perhaps more importantly, a Swede, the Finns pinned all of the blame on Edström. Finland was under Swedish rule for over 600 years and Swedes and Swedish-Finns continued to wield power

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ Yttergren, “J. Sigrid Edström and the Nurmi Affair of 1932,” 25.

in Finland. Finns in Helsinki, “refused to travel on the city's trams; they were made by the large Swedish company ASEA (the present ABB), of which Edström was the managing director.”²²⁶ Nurmi became a “victim of Swedes' envy and nit-picking.”²²⁷ Over the summer of 1932, Finns in numbers to the thousands marched in parades in support of Nurmi competing at the Los Angeles Games.²²⁸ Edström naively put in a letter to Brundage that, “it is only amongst the plebian population that they are displeased with the disqualification of Nurmi.”²²⁹ Kekkonen and SUL enacted a boycott against all “cooperation with Swedish athletics as long as the Swedish Athletics Association backed the banning of Nurmi.”²³⁰ The boycott ended three years later in 1935.

In addition to Edström, Brundage was one of the principle initiators into the Nurmi investigation. In a 1932 letter between Edström and the American Amateur Athletic Union, Edström wrote that, “We received in the later part of the last year a letter from your president Mr. Brundage, who asked us to investigate if the remuneration for the travelling expenses of Mr. Nurmi was in order.”²³¹ The investigation covered the two races Nurmi ran in Germany, putting von Halt in a position to push the investigation. As a personal friend as Brundage and Edström, Dr. von Halt approached the investigation with, “thoroughness and the desire to really obtain evidence against Nurmi.”

Despite Brundage, Dr. von Halt, and Brundage's best efforts, there truly wasn't sufficient evidence. However, as *The Reading Eagle* put it July 29, 1932, “Any reconsideration of the matter was blocked completely by one of the slickest political maneuvers in international athletic

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*

²²⁸ “Finns are Fretful over Nurmi's Case,” “Supreme in Sport,” (The Vancouver Sun, July 30, 1932).

²²⁹ Yttergren, “J. Sigrid Edström and the Nurmi Affair of 1932,” 26.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

²³¹ Sigrid Edström to Amateur Athletic Union of the U.S., February 11, 1932, from *Ibid.*, 24

history.”²³² Kekkonen argued that the IAAF acted in violation of the rules, which historian Leif Yttergren, concurs. The Board of the IAAF did not have the authority to ban individual athletes; it was under the national association’s jurisdiction. Edström knew this and ignored it; this is apparent because at the IAAF conference in Los Angeles in 1932, Edström changed the regulation to ban athletes temporarily or permanently. According to Yttergren, “Edström wanted to clean up amateur corruption and then no paragraphs were to get in the way.”²³³ Kekkonen threatened to pull Finland from the 1932 Olympics following denials of a repeal. Karma came around for Edström when the Finnish and Swedish Olympic delegations and officials traveled on the same boat to Los Angeles in 1932 for the Games. Nurmi, Kekkonen, and Edström were on the same boat from the Nordics to Los Angeles. In a letter, Edström stated that, “It is probably best for me not to be alone too near the railings on the boat.”²³⁴ Nurmi traveled to Los Angeles, hoping for the IAAF to change their decision even though he was injured, but he never ran on the Olympic track again until 1952. A journalist for *The Reading Eagle* wrote that it was, “like Hamlet without the celebrated Dane in the cast.”²³⁵ Finns, even presently, deny the suspension of Nurmi in 1932. Nurmi remained a national hero despite the IAAF ruling.

The OCOG of the Helsinki Olympics faced the same figures as Nurmi in 1952. The Cold War political entanglements of the IOC were no secret to the Finns, Edström now as president of the IOC. In 1952, Kekkonen was the Prime Minister of Finland, and Erik von Frenckell, a familiar character, was the president of the 1952 OCOG. Not mentioned previously, von Frenckell was a Swedish-Finn, complicating his position within the OCOG and his relationship

²³² “Great Nurmi Barred From Olympic Games As Teams Prepare For the Big Carnival,” (*The Reading Eagle*, July 29, 1932).

²³³ Yttergren, “J. Sigrid Edström and the Nurmi Affair of 1932,” 28.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

²³⁵ “Great Nurmi Barred From Olympic Games As Teams Prepare For the Big Carnival,” (*The Reading Eagle*, July 29, 1932).

with “true-Finns” like Kekkonen. However, von Frenckell’s success navigating the organization of the 1952 Olympics was praised throughout Finland.

This thesis explored various disagreements between the IOC and the Finnish OCOG, where like 1932, the IOC figures were the perpetrators of a political agenda while Finland appealed to the Olympic Spirit to hold a neutral Olympics. Perhaps a perfect “photo finish” to Finland’s continued struggle with the IOC, Nurmi returned to the Olympic track in 1952. During the Opening Ceremony in Helsinki on July 19th, 1952, the scoreboard flashed the text, “The Olympic torch will be brought into the Stadium by Paavo Nurmi,” which was a well-kept secret.²³⁶ The sacred Olympic Flame begins each Games, symbolizing the Olympics’ commitments to peace, friendship, and togetherness. The Helsinki Olympic Stadium fell silent and then the 70,000 person audience roared, many bursting into tears according to various reports.²³⁷ Nurmi ran for one last time at the Olympics, as the last runner of the Olympic torch relay, lighting the flame into the Olympic cauldron and then handing it off to Kolehmainen to light another flame. Nurmi running into the stadium, a secret kept from the IOC, is a testament of Finland’s pure commitment to the Olympic Movement and the Olympic Spirit. At the same event, the Finnish OCOG proclaimed the Olympic Truce and enabled the beginning of an inclusive, peaceful, and successful Olympics. Against all odds, including the IOC and the geopolitical realities of 1952, Finland triumphed and became a beacon of hope for the world for 16 days of Olympic competition. Finland finished first in 1952, not the Cold War nor the IOC.

²³⁶ “Life Story,” (Paavo Nurmi, The Official Site of the Flying Finn), (The Sports Museum of Finland).

²³⁷ “Life Story,” (Paavo Nurmi, The Official Site of the Flying Finn), (The Sports Museum of Finland).

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