

DIPLOMATIC GAMES

SPORT, STATECRAFT, AND
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
SINCE 1945

EDITED BY
HEATHER L. DICHTER
AND ANDREW L. JOHNS

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Introduction

Competing in the Global Arena: Sport and Foreign Relations since 1945

Andrew L. Johns

Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard of all rules and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence: in other words it is war minus the shooting.

—George Orwell, “The Sporting Spirit”

We see, therefore, that war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse carried on with other means.

—Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*

In late February 2013, former NBA star Dennis Rodman visited the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) in what several media outlets characterized as a “basketball diplomacy” mission aimed at encouraging “openness and better relations with the outside world.” Rodman, whose antics both on and off the court overshadowed his prodigious skill as one of the best rebounders and defenders in NBA history, seems like an odd choice to be a diplomatic emissary—an unofficial one, to be sure—of the United States to North Korea. His unique public persona aside, his visit occurred only weeks after the Pyongyang regime conducted its latest and most powerful nuclear test, which was strongly criticized by the United States, its allies, and other world powers for defying the United

The Cold War Games of a Colonial Latin American Nation

San Juan, Puerto Rico, 1966

Antonio Sotomayor

As an “unincorporated territory” of the United States yet as part of Latin America and the Caribbean, Puerto Rico presents multiple problems for academic study in areas that include nationalism, colonial/postcolonial studies, democracy/imperialism, and, of course, the politics of Olympism. Puerto Rico’s balancing act of belonging to, but not being part of, both the United States and Latin America permeates the often conflictive politics of the region. Yet Puerto Rico, like the Caribbean in general—except Cuba—has been kept at the fringes of world political attention and hence also from significant academic study. This chapter will demonstrate the pivotal role Puerto Ricans played during a crucial time in Cold War history, during the 1966 edition of the oldest regional games sponsored by the International Olympic Committee (IOC)—the Central American and Caribbean Games.

In this way, for Puerto Ricans these games were vital not only to their efforts of political modernization but also to their hopes of keeping alive their Olympic persona and to their agency in dealing with Caribbean Cold War diplomacy. Moreover, the source of the conflicts in hosting

the games, and the negotiations to solve them, show that although such international competition is seen as apolitical, they were a very political affair. The sport leaders involved in the matter—whether from Puerto Rico, Cuba, the United States, or the IOC—all took positions and acted within the urgency of Cold War politics.

As part of the Caribbean, Puerto Rico evidences some of the issues the “global South” faces in international sport. Puerto Rican Olympism arose from the colonial and postcolonial structures imposed by the North Atlantic powers, as seen in the anti-apartheid campaign and the solidarity movement between Africa and the English Caribbean presented by Aviston Downes in chapter 4. Nonetheless, just as sport was used by Juan Perón to showcase a “New Argentina,” as Cesar Torres discussed in chapter 5, the Tenth Central American and Caribbean Games (X CACG) of 1966 in San Juan, Puerto Rico, became for Puerto Ricans the event to showcase the vitality of their new political system.

Contrary to the anti-imperialist critique of the United States by Perón, for Puerto Ricans the idea was to showcase the commonwealth under the sponsorship of Washington. Furthermore, hosting these games was also the best indicator that Puerto Ricans were a legitimate nation-member of an international sporting community. Indeed, Puerto Rico in 1966 was a stable and a vital member of Central American and Caribbean Olympism, having participated in all editions of the Central American and Caribbean Games since the second in 1930. The Puerto Rican participation in Caribbean Olympism left no doubt that this was a nation with a solid regional athletic tradition, having participated and consistently finished in the top four of the medal count since 1930.¹ Now, by being hosts of the games, Puerto Ricans opened their doors to their regional neighbors in order to show their national vitality, athletic strength, and cultural uniqueness.

After the creation of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico in 1952 and continuing participation in the Pan-American Games (PAG) and Summer Olympic Games—Puerto Ricans had been participating in the PAG since 1955 and the Olympics since 1948—there was no doubt that Puerto Rico was a nation, at least culturally.² Granted, as John MacAloon states in his study of the colonial politics present in the 1979 PAG in San Juan, this nationhood was only internationally visible and applicable in sport, but it was a nation nonetheless.³ In this regard, Félix Huertas González

is correct in affirming that although Puerto Rico is not an independent nation-state, it has, as a result of the growing popularity and precedence given to Olympic competition worldwide, a presence that for many equals the status of nationhood.⁴ While this nonsovereign nationhood might seem contradictory to some, it also occurs in the French and English Caribbean.⁵

However, the X CACG became not only a showcase of Puerto Rico's nationhood but also, unwillingly, of its inherent colonial status. Faced with internationally active, communist Cuba and the uncertainty of its participation at the games, the process by which the Cubans were excluded and included shows that the games were as much a window through which to see colonial and regional politics and can be called colonial Olympism. Colonial Olympism, in this regard, could constitute a new way of seeing the particular ways in which the Olympic movement developed in areas of the world that were, and/or are, affected by colonial/imperial structures. The tension of transporting the Cuban delegation to Puerto Rican territory and the subsequent moments of hostility channeled Cold War conflicts. Joaquín Martínez-Rousset has documented the connection of politics to Puerto Rican Olympism, showing how Puerto Rico's first National Olympic Committee (NOC) in 1933 was a branch of the government.⁶ In the case of the 1966 X CACG, the dilemma of banning or inviting the Cubans reflected Cold War principles, forcing another conflictive situation of East versus West and bringing once again an air of hostility to the Caribbean. Tension from the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 still lingered in the minds, policies, and actions of the different parties involved.⁷

The conflicts surrounding these games were not limited to the bureaucracy of the government. There were many “incidents” on the ground involving athletes, spectators, the citizenry, and political groups. The pressure to defect constituted a premier tool against the Cuban delegation and by extension against the Cuban government. In the end these games demonstrated as well that while all parties involved tried to keep Olympism and politics separate, it ultimately proved an impossible task. The defense of Olympism became a political game, in which Puerto Ricans, Americans, Cubans, the IOC, and the Soviet bloc were directly involved.

The island of Puerto Rico, highly regarded for its strategic position in the Atlantic, has been called the “world's oldest colony” for a reason.⁸ Af-

ter four centuries of Spanish colonialism, in 1898 Puerto Rico was ceded as “war booty” to the United States as a result of the Spanish-American War. Puerto Ricans were made US citizens in 1917 just prior to the American entry into World War I, yet this citizenship lacked full parity with mainland US citizens. Puerto Ricans could not vote for president, send a full delegation to Congress to represent their interests, or be fully protected by the Bill of Rights in the US Constitution. As defined in the *Insular Cases* heard by the US Supreme Court in the early 1900s, Puerto Rico officially “belongs to, but is not part of, the United States.”⁹ For this reason, it has been argued that US citizenship was granted to Puerto Ricans not only to recruit soldiers for World War I but to secure a hegemonic hold.¹⁰ This hegemonic relationship has been studied in regard to sport and recreation. Roberta Park has shown how sport and recreation culture, policies, and infrastructure were part of a militaristic and Americanization agenda used by Washington to secure a “benevolent” presence on the island.¹¹

Even though Puerto Rico was excluded from being part of the United States, it was also prohibited from engaging in international trade or implement local tariffs.¹² Indeed, being “unincorporated” meant that Congress officially closed the door for eventual US statehood. Despite the opposition of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party—including a revolt for independence on October 30, 1950—the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico was established in 1952.¹³ The creation of the commonwealth, as Law 600 passed by Congress, followed a post-World War II decolonization trend. Yet this legal change in status mainly allowed Puerto Ricans to administer their own territory, leaving the legal parameters mentioned above unchanged.¹⁴ Thus after 1952, Puerto Rico became a sort of mirage of an autonomous political entity. Despite this lack of political sovereignty and democratic arrangement, during the early Cold War years Puerto Rico was regarded as a showcase of democracy and capitalism,¹⁵ mainly in comparison to the unstable republics of Latin America and the Caribbean that were plagued by dictatorships or authoritarian regimes.¹⁶

Negotiating Sport and Politics

The X CACG of 1966 in San Juan is noteworthy because a national delegation was denied invitation for political reasons. This occurred when the Puerto Rican authorities denied visas to the Cuban delegation, alleging

that its presence alongside approximately twenty thousand very vocal Cuban exiles in Puerto Rico constituted a threat to the stability and security of the island. Nonetheless, such denial of visas was not the first time communist Cuba was denied visas to an athletic event in the area. There had been a movement to deny visas to the Cuban delegation for the IX CACG of 1962 in Kingston, Jamaica.¹⁷ Moreover, Cuban athletes were denied visas to the IOC-sponsored XVI World Cup of Baseball in Colombia in 1965.¹⁸ They were also denied visas by the Guatemalan government for the soccer finals of the IOC-sponsored Confederation of North, Central American and Caribbean Association Football (CONCACAF) in 1965, and as a result of this they were denied visas for the regional soccer competitions in Curaçao. Nonetheless, the Puerto Rican case was particularly unique in that this was a US “territory” that had received many Cuban exiles and denied visas to communist Cuba, in turn a declared ally of the Soviet Union.

The development of Puerto Rican sport and Olympism had been primarily a result of the efforts of Julio Enrique Monagas. An athlete as a young student in the southern town of Ponce in the 1910s, Monagas by the early 1940s had become a close ally of the Popular Democratic Party (Partido Popular Democrático, or PPD), which headed the establishment of the commonwealth in 1952. He served as commissioner of the government-created sport institutions since 1941 and headed the Olympic Committee of Puerto Rico (COPR) since its creation in 1948. Thanks to his charismatic, populist, and dynamic sport leadership both locally and internationally, he quickly became a recognized leader in hemispheric Olympism from the 1940s through the early 1960s. For his involvement in the Olympic movement, Monagas was awarded the Olympic Order (silver) by the IOC on April 5, 1984. At that time Monagas was only the second person in the Americas to receive the award, the first one being Peter Ueberroth (gold) from the United States.

Monagas was elected president of the newly established Central American and Caribbean Sport Organization (CACSO) in a meeting held in Mexico City, February 8–10, 1960. This organization, whose creation dates back to May 13, 1959, in a meeting of NOC leaders in Kingston, was part of a larger plan of the IOC to organize Olympism in the Americas. It was considered by IOC member José de Jesús Clark Flores, from Mexico, to be the first step toward better world Olympic organization.¹⁹

Therefore, for Monagas the X CACG in his home country could have been the final test that would place him as a hero among Olympic leaders.

The decision to host the X CACG in San Juan was a result of much internal government discussion but also at the international level. Monagas, as president of CACSO, was able to make use of a petition by other NOCs that had declared Puerto Rico to be the ideal place to host the X CACG on account of its successful athletic history but also as a result of its strategic geographical location and tourist attractions.²⁰ These same regional sport leaders had expressed wanting to come to the island even if it meant running competitions in the streets or swimming events in the ocean.²¹ For Puerto Ricans, the crux of the matter was that it was imperative to host the games in order to prove to the countries of the area, and the IOC, that Puerto Rico's political modernization as a commonwealth had been successful. It was, indeed, a matter of political legitimation. By hosting these games, Puerto Ricans could now say that they had "progressed" enough to be an Olympic host to other nations. Their new political status, as an *estado libre asociado*—literally in English "free associated state," yet the official version is "commonwealth"—of the United States, provided the political stature to claim true sporting autonomy and athletic diplomacy.

It is important to recognize that all groups involved in the politics within these games claimed to be protecting the Olympic ideal from political intervention. Yet, by doing this, all involved actually took very political stances that mirrored Cold War and regional political conflicts. In early 1964, Monagas asked Roberto Sánchez Vilella whether Puerto Rican authorities planned to ask the US Department of State to issue visas for the Cuban delegation.²² Sánchez Vilella, who this same year was elected the second governor of the commonwealth, after Luis Muñoz Marín's unmatched sixteen-year incumbency, wrote to Muñoz Marín regarding the Cubans' visas. In his letter Sánchez Vilella aligned himself with an important segment of the island's population, led by Cuban refugees who wished Cuba to be banned from the games.²³ He wrote: "This Government decidedly opposes that a Cuban team come to Puerto Rico to participate in said games as long as the present Cuban regime governs that island. We do not think that their presence can be of any service but, to the contrary, it will create a difficult and intolerable situation in the country."²⁴

His main reason for this ban was that there were in the island some

"18,000 Cuban refugees" who had escaped the "totalitarian and Communist regime" of Fidel Castro. Because of this, he thought it would be almost impossible to prevent "clashes" between the exiles and Castro's athletes due to "the demonstrated aggressive attitude in Jamaica as well as in Brazil and other places of the hemisphere where they have participated."²⁵ Yet, while these reasons were in relation to an internal conflict between two groups of Cubans in Puerto Rico, Sánchez Vilella also mentioned direct affronts by the Cuban government toward Puerto Rico. He cited the expressions of Ramón Calcinas of Cuba's United Party of the Socialist Revolution of Cuba (Partido Unido de la Revolución Socialista de Cuba, or PURSC): "Puerto Rico will be free by the fight of their people and the solidarity of all countries of this continent and of the world. . . . Puerto Rico will be free like South Vietnam will be, who is fighting against North American imperialism, just like Angola and Venezuela."²⁶

Their conclusions were based on the report of a commission that studied the case and stated that Castro's government since 1959 had "developed, sponsored, and directed" an interventionist policy throughout the continent to establish "Communist regimes." Although making no direct reference to the missile crisis just two years before, the commonwealth government viewed the expressions by Calcinas as "acts of political aggression," as were other acts such as calling the Puerto Rican governor a "satrap" and "traitor"²⁷ and expressing his support for a "war of national liberation" in Puerto Rico.

The sentiment by the Puerto Rican government has to be viewed in light of its strong alliance and territorial status in relation to the United States, hence its inherent ideological influence to the Right and capitalism. In 1948 the local legislature adopted a McCarthyist-inspired law, commonly known as the Gag Law (Law No. 53, 1948–1957).²⁸ Modeled after the Smith Act, the Gag Law made illegal the open discussion and display of symbols related to Puerto Rican independence. The nationalists who remained active after the repression of the 1950s were often labeled communists, regardless of their ideological orientation, and were further persecuted by both local and federal authorities.²⁹ In 1987 the Federal Bureau of Investigation confirmed having kept files (known as *carpetas*) for thirty years on thousands of individuals for supposedly engaging in proindependence activities, evidencing in turn systematic harassment and surveillance of its own citizenry.

These accusations by Calcinas were most despised by the commonwealth leaders who were trying to present their new political status as a political formula of decolonization. Having a Cuban delegation in Puerto Rico attacking their autonomy went against the very athletic diplomatic mission of presenting a decolonized Puerto Rican Olympic delegation. Simply said, Puerto Rico's presence as a sporting nation represented the commonwealth's autonomy to the world. Having this autonomy mocked and attacked by communist Cubans was considered by the commonwealth government to be a political affront.

However, the intention of using sport to show a sovereign Puerto Rico under the auspices of the United States went beyond Cuba and was immersed in a world divided by East and West. The communist powers had made their position clear regarding Puerto Rico. At the 1960 United Nations assembly, Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev had exhorted the body to place Puerto Rico in the list of colonies still to be freed.³⁰ Plus, according to Victor Riesel, a small contingent of Puerto Rican communists had traveled to Beijing, where it was received by a cheering crowd while the radio called for Puerto Rican "freedom from American Imperialism."³¹ He continued, saying that there were Chinese communist agents recruiting in Puerto Rico, pointing as well to a Puerto Rican clandestine communist force of four to five hundred in the mountains of El Yunke, trained in Cuba and ready to start a communist revolution.

With all of this in mind, Sánchez Vilella thought it was better not to have any sort of relation with the Cubans, "not even in the field of sports."³² He did acknowledge that the United States had revised its policy and now accepted the Soviet Union and other communist countries in Olympic Games, but the Puerto Rican case was different. According to him the Soviet Union had abandoned its support of other "wars of national liberation" and instead assumed a policy of political coexistence, something very different from the Cuban case. As a result, the commonwealth government's decision was "definite," as it vowed to "actively combat any measure before the United States government intended to allow the entry of the Cuban delegation to Puerto Rico."³³ Regardless that Washington maintained sovereignty over borders, customs, and immigration in Puerto Rico, commonwealth leaders were willing to defend their alleged sovereignty against US authority. Given the consistent support and consent to US rule in Puerto Rico, this expression by the secretary of state was

particularly extraordinary. The Cubans had touched a very sensitive political nerve by accusing Puerto Ricans of being colonials. It was even more threatening because it came from a communist, former Caribbean "brotherly" country and because the games were in Puerto Rico. More than an attack on all the work of gaining international credibility by the COPR, it was an attack on the very nature of the "compact of association" with the United States.

When the news got out in early 1965 that the commonwealth government, now led by Roberto Sánchez Vilella, would oppose the granting of visas to the Cubans, it became the talk of the country, being covered as well in the press in New York and later in Chicago and Los Angeles.³⁴ Joaquín Martínez Rousset in his newspaper column "Desde el Dug-out" pointed to the Olympic-political dilemma by indicating that Avery Brundage, as president of the IOC, could take away Puerto Rico's seat due to the interference of politics in Olympic competition. In his observation, Martínez Rousset was right: according to Olympic rules there cannot be political interference in Olympic tournaments, an issue well known by the COPR since the internal conflicts of the 1950s.³⁵

By early 1965 Monagas had written to Brundage, communicating to him the commonwealth's position with regard to Cuba and the volatile situation of the Cuban exiles on the island. To this Martínez Rousset wondered, "What will happen if Cuba sends some two hundred athletes to the X Games and here they confront some 20,000 countrymen exiled and willing to send them to the firing squad?"³⁶ While Martínez Rousset acknowledged Brundage's earlier resolution of taking away the site of the World Championship of Basketball from Manila for the Philippine government's rejection of visas for some communist countries, he argued that in Manila there were not twenty thousand exiles from those countries. The X CACG in San Juan was a "government against government problem" from an "anticommunist" government against one "painted red."³⁷ He finished, affirming that "it is possible that this is the most explosive situation that the IOC has ever been stumbled within all of its history."³⁸

Again, while there is no direct reference to the Cuban Missile Crisis in Martínez Rousset's article, there was an interesting use of Cold War warfare language: "firing squad," "explosive," "anticommunist," "painted red." It was, as a matter of fact, a highly problematic issue with the IOC, which attempted to uphold a strong stance against political intervention

during Brundage's presidency.³⁹ Yet the Puerto Rican case was special, and this is precisely what Monagas told Brundage in a private cable. Although internally the commonwealth's government, if needed, was willing to go against the United States, Monagas publicly presented it as if Puerto Rico was just following US mandates when he stated that since Washington had no diplomatic relations with Cuba, the commonwealth would not intervene. Plus, Monagas continued to say, the presence of twenty thousand Cuban exiles "can be the cause of a tragedy in an activity that is supposed to foster goodwill amongst the different countries of the world."⁴⁰ The new Puerto Rican secretary of state, Dr. Carlos Lastra, indicated to the press that his government maintained its decision not to ask for the visas for the Cubans and that its decision was "in harmony" with the US Department of State.⁴¹ As we will see later, this latter statement was not necessarily true. Moreover, the Puerto Rican authorities used their colonial relationship to appear innocent in relation to the Cubans' visas, thereby making the United States the ultimate culprit.

After Monagas called Brundage to inquire of the IOC's position, Brundage acknowledged the complexity of the problem and stated that he would need to further study the circumstances.⁴² The situation was definitely complicated, because if Puerto Rico lost the privilege to host the games as a result of political interference, the alternative site options were equally problematic. One was Guatemala, yet it admitted not having the funds or infrastructure to host the games, while also declaring that it would deny visas to the Cubans. The other options were Colombia and El Salvador, which had also broken diplomatic relations with Cuba.

Brundage stood his ground and told the international press that the IOC "strongly opposed political interference in sport" and that if Puerto Rico failed to invite all nation-members of the Olympic movement in the area, it risked losing the opportunity in the future to host Olympic Games. For Monagas, the COPR was innocent of involving politics and sport, maintaining that the COPR had not been intervening with commonwealth authorities regarding the visas.⁴³ According to him, the decision to deny the visas was "entirely governmental" and was not related to the COPR whatsoever.

News of the problem of the Cuban visas and the X CACG began to spread throughout the Olympic world. The Central American and the Caribbean nations were expectedly attentive to the situation, and even in

Colombia there were rumors that Puerto Rico had relinquished hosting the games.⁴⁴ Coverage of the conflict reached Santa Barbara, California, Brundage's winter residence, where a newspaper reported on February 24, 1965, that the IOC president opposed the decision to ban Cubans from the games but indicated that the matter was in the hands of CACSO.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, Brundage also stated that the topic would be brought up in the next IOC meeting in Madrid. To some extent, it can be said that Brundage was hoping that CACSO would follow the IOC's nonpolitical interference and argue for the visas to be issued. The problem had definitely reached European Olympic circles when Juan Cepero from *El Mundo*, the principal newspaper in the island, reported on February 25 that Monagas had called D. T. Pain, the secretary-treasurer of the International Amateur Athletics Federation (IAAF), in London to explain the situation. Pain promised to study the case and help to resolve the issue.⁴⁶

An Olympic Resolution of Cold War Hostility

In the meantime, the leaders of CACSO meeting in Caracas, Venezuela, produced an unprecedented decision called the Caracas Resolution. Brundage's hopes to see CACSO oppose political intervention in Olympism vanished when CACSO, presided over by Monagas, officially passed this resolution banning the Cuban delegation from the X CACG in San Juan.⁴⁷ Citing "security concerns," CACSO also indicated that its resolution upheld the IOC's nondiscrimination statute based on race, religion, or politics. Moreover, the alternative host countries—Colombia, Guatemala, and El Salvador—indicated that physically they could not host the games and that they could not guarantee that their governments would grant the Cubans visas on account of international agreements signed in their membership of the Organization of American States.⁴⁸

The Caracas Resolution was signed by Monagas as president of CACSO (Puerto Rico); Dr. Anibal Illueca Sibauste, vice president (Panama); José Beracasa, treasurer (Venezuela); Manuel de J. Rivas Rodríguez (El Salvador); Víctor Luque Salanueva (Mexico); and George Abrahams (Jamaica). Also present at the meeting were Gen. José de J. Clark Flores (Mexico), honorary president of CACSO and member of the IOC's Executive Board, and Dr. Julio Bustamante (Mexico), IOC member. Though the meeting resulted in the signing of the resolution, it was not without

conflict. As it happened, it was a political showdown that demonstrated Monagas's weight in international sport and the politics of athletic diplomacy.

An anonymous letter sent to Brundage marked "CONFIDENTIAL" confirms the domestic political bias of Monagas in the matter of the Cubans' visas in an effort to "strengthening his political position with the new Commonwealth in power in Puerto Rico."⁴⁹ The author, who remains unidentified, concluded that the executive committee of CACSO (with the exception of Luque Salanueva) came ready to exclude Cuba from the games, a meeting that he rather called "the hold-up of Caracas." The sporting political pieces were well played, because regardless of the invitation of the Latin American members of the IOC, only Bustamante and Clark showed up, having no voting leverage in the final decision. As the resolution was discussed, members of the executive committee (Monagas, Illueca Sibauste, and Julio Illescas Rojas from Guatamala) complained that the IOC was too old and archaic to reach a decision on the Cuban case before the games began.

Things then got more personal, and verbal affronts even targeted Brundage. As a result of the escalating instability, the anonymous author suggested that Monagas "abandon this stupid farce" as it would get him and the Puerto Rican delegation into trouble and could even result in the withdrawal of IOC recognition to the X CACG and a ban on hosting the Olympic Games. As a matter of fact, he suggested that since there was so much discontent toward the IOC and Brundage, why not disassociate completely from the Olympic movement and carry out the games without IOC recognition? Such a suggestion resulted in more discussion and loud words. In the end, the resolution passed, and the meeting was adjourned.

Suffice it to say, the Caracas Resolution was a political struggle not only involving Cold War ideologies but also the position of Puerto Rico as a leading "country" in regional politics. Monagas, by setting the tone and content of the resolution to ban communist Cuba from the games, made the commonwealth's policy in regard to communism and set the parameters of how the games, and the region's politics for that matter, would play out. It also left clear that CACSO under Monagas's leadership was willing to go against the "old and archaic" IOC in a position relatively similar to Sánchez Vilella's willingness to go against the Department of State.

The news of the CACSO resolution reached Brundage shortly after

it was made public in March 1965. As indicated in the confidential letter above, General Clark was strongly opposed to the Caracas Resolution and as a result asked Brundage and the IOC to cancel his earlier petition for IOC sponsorship of the games.⁵⁰ After a meeting of the IOC's executive board on April 12, 1965, in Lausanne, Brundage agreed with General Clark and communicated to CACSO that it needed to apply for IOC recognition of the games. This recognition was contingent upon the organizing committee inviting all regional members of the IOC to the X CACG, including Cuba, citing that the IOC had "an inflexible policy against political interference in sport, for any reason whatsoever." The meeting in Lausanne included all international amateur sport federations, which approved this policy "unanimously." Finally Brundage, regretting the situation in Puerto Rico, thought that Puerto Ricans had no excuse because the same situation regarding Cuba's participation at the CACG occurred in Jamaica in 1962.⁵¹

However, although the situation in Jamaica had presented the same groups involved in the conflict—that is Puerto Ricans, Cuban athletes, and some Cuban exiles—the situation was hardly the same.⁵² First, regardless of whether the presence of the twenty thousand exiles in Puerto Rico was used as the rationale to ban the Cuban delegation from the games, the Cuban presence was a real threat and with the incidents in Kingston so recent, security was a practical concern for the organizing committee. Although it is true that thousands of anti-Castro Cubans had immigrated to Jamaica since the end of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, their situation was considered temporary, as Jamaica was seen as a springboard for eventual refugee status in the United States. For example, by January 1962 some 10,000 Cuban exiles had gone to Jamaica, yet 9,670 had received US visas.⁵³ Second, although being also heavily influenced by US Caribbean policy, Jamaica was nonetheless an independent and sovereign nation, with control over its ports, customs, and visas.⁵⁴ Puerto Rico was totally dependent on the United States regarding who could enter the island. Third, Puerto Rico, as an unincorporated territory of the United States, had to follow US policy on foreign relations, and at that time Washington had broken diplomatic relations with Cuba. Indeed, the United States had just come out of a real war scenario involving Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba. Thus a potentially violent incident involving revolutionary Cuban athletes in a US territory with American citizens

and thousands of ardent Cuban exiles was a recipe for disaster and could renew the real threat of war.

General Clark, although being isolated from the Caracas meeting, still intended to work toward including Cuba in the X CACG. He met with Monagas in late July 1965 and talked over the phone with Germán Rieckehoff Sampayo of the organizing committee to help resolve the situation. His greatest wish was that CACSO would "find its way" and not lose its "permanent recognition" within the IOC.⁵⁵ Rieckehoff Sampayo, who became another preeminent figure of Puerto Rican Olympism, became a sport leader through his work with the early stages of the local top-level basketball league, presiding over it from 1942 to 1944. From 1947 to 1949 Rieckehoff Sampayo worked at the College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts (Colegio de Agricultura y Artas Mecánicas) in Mayagüez in the development of sport facilities, while in 1963 he founded the Equestrian Federation of Puerto Rico, which marked as well his full and official introduction into the COPR. Later in 1977, Rieckehoff Sampayo became Puerto Rico's first IOC member, and in 1980 the IOC decorated him with the Olympic Order medal.

At stake was not only the X CACG but also the very existence of CACSO and Central American and Caribbean Olympism. It seems that after the ultimatum by the IOC and President Brundage, CACSO (led by Monagas), COPR (now under the brief presidency of Francisco Bueso), and the organizing committee led by Emilio Huyke reevaluated their position and now were open to the invitation of all IOC members of the area to the games, including Cuba.⁵⁶ With this change in position, it was a matter of dealing with Puerto Rican and US authorities to issue the Cubans visas. This proved to be difficult, since the Puerto Rican government was still upholding its position of banning Cuba from the games. At least this is what can be inferred by Dr. Lastra's comments in the newspapers when he said, "We will neither help them [the organizing committee] get the visas for the Cuban players nor will we oppose the granting of such visas."⁵⁷ With broken diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba, this might have meant that the commonwealth government was relying on a refusal of the United States to grant the visas.

What happened next is very important to understanding the politics of the CACG, how it began to resolve this problem, and the implications for international politics, including Puerto Rican colonialism. It was an

outside element, once again, that interceded in Puerto Rican Olympism because Brundage, in conversation with C. Allan Steward, director of the Office of Caribbean Affairs in the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, managed to get the Department of State to issue visas to the Cuban delegation. In fact, on December 5, 1965, Secretary of State Dean Rusk sent a cable to Felicio Torregrosa, technical director for the organizing committee, indicating that the Cubans' visas would be processed.⁵⁸ In this sense, Brundage as president of the IOC, committed the exact same error he had been decrying throughout his presidency: political interference. By assuring the Cuban visas from the State Department, he had actually interfered in a political matter to safeguard the participation of the Cuban delegation at the X CACG. Moreover, he and Steward had overridden and totally disregarded the policy of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico of not issuing visas, an act that exposed their inherent colonial status. It became evident that Puerto Rico, although claiming sporting and even political autonomy, had to some extent failed to have fully achieved either of the two. It is exactly this colonial dynamic that separated the Puerto Rican situation from the Jamaican one and is what made, and still makes, Puerto Rico unique within Latin American politics and international sports.

With this move, the IOC was again unmasked as a political actor in the CACG and in Olympism in general. This politico-Olympic relation was certainly known back then as well. It was actually acknowledged by Steward when he stated that "it would be very bad policy for the Government to refuse visas simply because they are Cubans, because then it would prevent any U.S. city from being considered for the Olympic Games."⁵⁹ That is, Steward knew the importance of athletic diplomacy in international competition, and he was not willing to risk it because of stubborn colonial subjects. Moreover, he understood the significance of having recognition and support of the IOC if, and when, the United States wanted to host Olympic Games in the future. Even though the United States was immersed in the Cold War, it was more important to play by the rules of the IOC if it wanted to win the war on the athletic field.

It was only after Brundage himself guaranteed the visas that he finally gave IOC's patronage to the X CACG in San Juan.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, to safeguard the legitimacy of CACSO, as General Clark had requested,

he later communicated to Torregrosa and the organizing committee that they needed final official recognition from CACSO.⁶¹ But just because Brundage had obtained confirmation that the State Department would issue visas, it did not mean that the Puerto Rican government would accept it. As stated before, they were willing to confront any move by the United States to allow the entry of the Cubans into Puerto Rican territory. This is exactly what Clark noted in the Mérida meeting of December 7 and 8. At the meeting he could not get assurance from the COPR that the Puerto Rican government would accept the visas if granted.⁶² In fact, he was totally opposed to the manner in which Brundage obtained the visas. Declaring that Washington was working against IOC regulations, he indicated that it was a matter of the Puerto Rican government to affirm "its acceptance to the Cuban participation."⁶³ Based on this, Clark gave another ultimatum to the Puerto Rican government that included a deadline of 1:00 p.m. on December 17, 1965, to "guarantee that the athletes, officials, and technicians in general [read Cuba] will be accepted." Said certification, he continued, should be addressed to CACSO with copies to IOC officials and to IOC members in Latin America. Moreover, if such certification failed to be clear and to the satisfaction of CACSO, Puerto Rico then forfeited its rights to be the site of the X CACG.⁶⁴ Once again, the ball was back in Puerto Rico's court.

If all of this was not enough, tensions kept escalating when the Soviets got involved in the matter in favor of their Cuban allies. The games were getting closer, and on December 31, 1965, Brundage replied to a letter sent by Konstantin Andrianov of the Soviet Olympic Committee saying that for the last several months he and General Clark had been "devoted to defending the right of your Cuban friends (although many claim they are not following Olympic regulations) to participate in the Central American Games, which are scheduled for Puerto Rico next year." At the end of the letter, Brundage rhetorically wondered, "When are we going to be able to concentrate on sport and not be bothered with these unsolvable political problems that do not concern us?"⁶⁵

Not only were the Soviets paying more attention as the games drew closer, but also locally another group of Puerto Ricans entered the conflict, not against the Cuban delegation but in their favor. This group, called the Movement for Independence (Movimiento Pro Independencia, or MPI), had been founded in 1959 in Mayagüez under the leadership of Juan Mari

Bras and gathered discontented members from the Independent Puerto Rican Party (Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño), as well as from the Nationalist Party (Partido Nacionalista). The MPI's members had declared themselves to be sympathizers of the Cuban Revolution and, adopting the Cubans' methods of popular mobilization under anti-imperialist ideology, claimed the independence of Puerto Rico and expressed their solidarity with, and active support for, the Cuban delegation in Puerto Rico, vowing to protect it.⁶⁶ An MPI "manifesto" was published in the Cuban newspaper *Granma* on March 24, 1966: "The Cuban athletes will not be alone. There will be the Puerto Rican sportsmen and *independentistas* to stop the provocation plans against Cuba that Yankee imperialism intends to pursue and to answer, along with the Cuban athletes if they are forced to do it as well, said provocations in the necessary manner. The people of Puerto Rico, certainly will not permit that those worms and lackeys usurp their representation or moreover hurt our prestige and national dignity."⁶⁷ With this in mind, Monagas was visibly worried about the involvement of the MPI during the games, which according to him had set up an "embassy" in Cuba, and he even worried about possible student reinforcements brought from the Dominican Republic.⁶⁸ Moreover, Monagas thought that if Brundage were present during the games, hopefully a reign of peace, or at least composure, would be achieved. Yet Brundage declined the invitation because he needed to be present at the opening ceremony of a new museum in San Francisco that would hold his collection of Oriental art.⁶⁹

The Games in San Juan: A Theater of Olympism and Animosity

With the Cubans' visas approved, it appeared as though the games would be held without problems. The Puerto Rican government, although originally opposed to receiving the Cuban delegation even if the United States issued the visas, seemed now to follow US mandates and allowed the entry of Cuban athletes, thus exhibiting colonial status. This change in attitude by the Puerto Ricans was apparently a result of Reickehoff Sampayo's negotiations with local authorities.⁷⁰ Thus the threat of a Puerto Rican-US conflict was quickly subdued. Because the United States and Cuba had broken diplomatic relations, the travel plan consisted of Cubans, once having their visas, traveling to a third country, such as Mexico or Jamaica, and from there taking a commercial plane to San Juan.⁷¹

However, for the Cubans the extra step in travel entailed an “act of aggression” by the United States because they believed they should enter Puerto Rico without any impediment. Castro expressed his opinion as well that the whole deal was a “stupid, cynical blackmail.”⁷² The Cuban press also covered the problems of the visas, stating they only wanted to have relations directly with the COPR. Nonetheless, they understood that this was impossible because Puerto Rico was an *estado libre asociado* and that “the associated impedes them from being free.”⁷³ In the end, the Cubans’ visas were later taken from Mexico City, where they were issued, to Havana.⁷⁴

The Cuban Olympic Committee (COC) had already been notified by Brundage of the problems pertaining to its alleged political interference in sport.⁷⁵ In its defense, COC president Manuel González Guerra wrote a seven-page letter dated March 30, 1966, indicating that their government did not interfere in Olympism and that they respected and strictly followed IOC rules.⁷⁶ He went on to identify that other countries had gotten away with the violation of nonreligious or political discrimination in the Olympics. For example, the Jamaican Olympic authorities had a Christian priest bless the 1962 games and “spoke of God, spoke of politics, of democracy” in their opening ceremony. Moreover, he wondered why there was no action taken against counterrevolutionaries when they “attack” the Cubans with propaganda. He believed that there was a real “threat of attack” in Puerto Rico not only from their “enemies” but also from Monagas and even the mayor of San Juan, a claim to which the IOC did not seem to give relevance. Yet the most recent form of aggression for him was that according to the United States, without IOC objection, Cubans needed to go to Mexico or Jamaica to obtain their visas, even though the Swiss embassy in Havana usually was in charge of US matters.⁷⁷

The IOC, in its executive board meeting in Rome in April 1966, gave final recognition to the X CACG to be held in Puerto Rico, which for them was “an independent state under the protection of the United States with whom it had a custom union.”⁷⁸ The unilateral and external approval of the Cubans’ visas by both the United States and the IOC was silenced or unacknowledged in the official minutes. This colonial condition of Puerto Rico, even at the IOC level, was the price Puerto Ricans paid in order to be recognized as a legitimate nation, a member of the Olympic world.

For months in 1966 no one knew how the Cuban delegation would make its way, if at all, to Puerto Rico. These were moments of immense tension due to the unpredictability of the Cuban delegation and the meanings of a communist delegation in US territory at the height of the Cold War. Finally, and without the knowledge of the organizing committee or any other Puerto Rican authorities, the Cuban merchant vessel *Cerro Pelado* appeared four miles outside San Juan, at the edge of international waters, on June 10, 1966, just one day prior to the opening ceremonies. Since Puerto Rican ports were—and still are—controlled by the United States, and with the Americans not allowing Cuban vessels to enter US territory, the Cuban ship positioned at international waters so close to the United States meant trouble. This audacious, provocative, and risky move by the Cubans placed an immediate alert to all parties involved, including COPR and the organizing committee, the Puerto Rican and US governments, the IOC, and different NOCs from the Soviet bloc. It was another crisis at sea, involving East versus West, without nuclear missiles yet fertile for conflict.

Actually the leaders of the Cuban delegation had already contacted their Russian allies on June 8, 1966, saying that their “participation ed [sic] Puerto Rico under threat as the USA authorities not permitting Cuban team aircraft landing.”⁷⁹ It also seems that the Cubans had contacted their allies in the island, the MPI, and informed them of their decision to travel by ship, because on June 10 a boat carrying Juan Mari Brás, Norman Pietri, and Ángel Silén went to receive the *Cerro Pelado* in open waters.⁸⁰ Mari Bras, Pietri, and Silén were not directly connected to sport, the government or the organizing committee but were known proindependence Puerto Rican leaders, sympathetic to the Cuban Revolution, and vocal about their defiance of US imperialism. In effect, it looked like the Cubans were lining up their “chess pieces” just in case they needed protection. When local authorities were informed that the Cuban vessel was just outside the international water-border, threatening a political disaster, they once more contacted emerging Puerto Rican Olympic leader Rieckehoff Sampayo to intervene between the Puerto Rican government and the Cuban leaders.

Rieckehoff Sampayo, along with other Puerto Rican authorities that included Secretary of State Lastra and Puerto Rican athletic legend Eugenio Guerra, boarded the US Coast Guard ship *Peacock*, under a down-

pour and great pressure from the public and press, to meet the *Cerro Pelado*. As they approached the Cuban ship, and in a moment of Caribbean and Latin American brotherhood, the Cubans cheered the Puerto Rican delegation while also playing through the speakers of the ship songs of Puerto Rican singer and Latin American sensation Tito Lara.⁸¹ Once they reached the Cuban ship—considered Cuban territory—it took the Puerto Rican delegation, with passports in hand and on rough Atlantic waters, over an hour to board it. The Puerto Ricans were received by Capt. Cornelio Pino Izquierdo, while Rieckehoff Sampayo discussed the situation with Minister of Education José Llanusa, González Guerra, and others.⁸²

The instructions given to Rieckehoff Sampayo by Gov. Sánchez Vilella were to allow the Cubans to enter the island with their visas but to not allow the ship to cross into US waters. After both sides discussed these terms for over an hour, Rieckehoff Sampayo, who had graduated from the University of Puerto Rico Law School in 1952, proposed an idea to try to dissuade them from bringing the ship into San Juan harbor. His theory was bold, as he confronted the Cuban Revolution with the exiles in Puerto Rico: “This vessel is property of the Cuban government that was seized from the property of many Cubans who currently live in Puerto Rico, without proper law procedure. If this vessel enters Puerto Rican waters and, under the Laws of Admiralty, a Cuban initiates action against the Cuban government, this ship gets detained in assurance statement and many years will pass in which it will stay in Puerto Rico under arrest.”⁸³

Reacting to this “theory” by Rieckehoff Sampayo, the Cubans stopped negotiations and “scribbled something to the telegraphist.” During this recess in the negotiations, the Puerto Ricans were served with coffee and Cuban tobaccos. Meanwhile, it is probable that the Cubans took this opportunity to raise their complaint to their Soviet bloc allies because Brundage received emergency telegrams from the leaders of the Hungarian, Bulgarian, Romanian, and Soviet Olympic Committees. Andrianov, president of the Soviet Olympic Committee, cabled Brundage, “Ask urgent IOC official assistance for Cuban teams enter Puerto Rico.”⁸⁴ The Cubans, as during the missile crisis four years before, were fully backed by their communist allies.

Nevertheless, this stressful moment was dissipated when, after some minutes, the telegraphist returned with a piece of paper for Llanusa. After

reading it the Cuban delegation said, “We are ready to get off and leave the ship here.”⁸⁵ It is uncertain what that piece of paper said, and it is uncertain what influence Brundage might have played in all of this, but at the end of this tense moment of sport diplomacy, the Cubans decided to leave the ship in international waters and transport the delegation to land by other means. We do have the following statement from the vice president of the COC Armando Riva Patterson from that afternoon: “The Cuban Olympic Committee considers it a great victory for sports and the Olympic movement the entrance of the Cuban delegation in San Juan Puerto Rico. . . . Once again the ever so clear ideas of the renewer of the Olympic Games Baron Pierre de Coubertin have triumphed and have put in evidence all those who really intend in a permanent manner to mix politics with sports. . . . We expect great success from these games that constitute part of the history of the nations located in Central America and the Caribe.”⁸⁶ In this way, while claiming sport victory, the Cuban delegation washed its hands of political intervention by announcing its peaceful attendance at the games. By doing this, its members thought they were protecting Olympism by overcoming political obstacles. Nonetheless, they knew that real political tension on the island still persisted, warning the Puerto Rican authorities and the members of the IOC that “different groups of Cuban exiles resident . . . have proclaimed their purpose to attack our delegation.”⁸⁷

The actual transportation of the delegates began at 5:00 a.m. the next day, June 11, the day of the opening ceremonies. Dramatically and under great public pressure, several private boats went to the *Cerro Pelado* to pick up the athletes, an ordeal that lasted more than four hours. After going through customs and immigration, they were taken by bus to the opening ceremony. The fact that the Cubans were able to land peacefully on the island was not the end of the confrontations but just the beginning of the conflicts on land.

The reception of the Cubans in San Juan was full of different reactions. Some reporters indicated that the Cuban athletes were very cordial and talkative yet would not speak about politics.⁸⁸ The only Cuban representative who expressed his political dissatisfaction at the games was Llanusa, who, as soon as setting foot on one of the local boats on its way to port, accused the United States of “interfer[ring], obstruct[ing] and delay[ing]” Cuba’s participation at the games.⁸⁹ Throughout the bus trip

to the opening ceremonies at Hiram Bithorn Stadium, the delegation was received with crowds alongside the road by two groups: the first showing signs of support—led by the MPI—that read “Fatherland or Death, We Will Win” and “Greetings Cuban Athletes,”⁹⁰ and other groups showing hostility—led by the Cuban exiles—with signs that read, for example, “Russians Go Home.” It is interesting to see the clear Cold War political alignment of these groups when the MPI used the Cuban revolutionary slogan, and the Cuban exiles wrote their sign in English referring to the Cubans as Russians.

Regardless of this political friction, the opening ceremony was realized without any major problems at 3:00 p.m. before a crowd of 19,262 spectators.⁹¹ The official fanfare of the games was composed by Puerto Rican music idol Rafael Hernández. The opening of the games included the hoisting of the flags of the CACG, the IOC, and the city of San Juan. A chorus of a hundred voices sang the official hymns of the games, including the popular song “En Mi Viejo San Juan,” to which the crowd also sang along.⁹² The CACG symbolic torch, known as Fuego Azteca, reached the stadium after arriving from Mexico on June 1 and was run across the island.⁹³

Despite this air of national and regional confraternity, and despite the fact that these games are known today for being peaceful and uneventful, there were moments of friction between Cuban athletes, Cuban exiles, anti- and pro-Castro Puerto Ricans. One of the most covered incidents, the one that produced the most drama, was the only known voluntary defection by a Cuban athlete at these games. Juan Pablo Vega Romero, a wrestler, defected at midnight on Sunday, June 12, not only because he was against Castro’s communism⁹⁴ but because according to him there was no racial equality in Cuba.⁹⁵ Quickly after defecting from the Olympic Village, Vega Romero was taken to the US Immigration Services district offices, where he also declared wanting to be taken to the United States. Since Puerto Rico is a US territory, there is no legal difference in refugee status between the two places in cases of defection.

There was another incident with a “defector.” Initially, it started as a rumor when it was reported that an athlete by the nickname “Chiqui” was trying to defect and reunite with her exiled parents who lived in Puerto Rico.⁹⁶ The reporter assured that she was being held prisoner and isolated in the Olympic Village. However, this version was later rebuked

by Llanusa, who declared that the athlete, María Cristina González, was actually “rescued from unknown individuals” in a car who had tried to kidnap her.⁹⁷ She was later taken to the *Cerro Pelado* “for her safety.” These rumors of defection were constant, as Llanusa dismissed the alleged seventeen defections of female athletes who tried to jump off of a Puerto Rican bus to ask for asylum.⁹⁸

Encouragement to defect can be said to have been a systematic project to attack Castro’s communist government during the games in San Juan. There was even a Puerto Rican governmental plan in place—involving the local police, the Immigration Service, and the State Department—before the games started in case of Cuban athlete defectors.⁹⁹ There was a lot of pressure from the Puerto Rican public, the media, and Cuban exiles on Cuban athletes to defect. As a matter of fact, the majority of the Cuban delegation received some sort of monetary offer to defect and make declarations against Castro’s regime.¹⁰⁰ According to COC president González Guerra, the radio station WIAC transmitted the show of Torres Velázquez, who exhorted Cuban athletes under “provocative and offensive” expressions to defect, giving phone numbers to individuals who would give food and shelter to up to twenty-five athletes for up to thirty days. The initiative was called “Operation Jump to the Side of Freedom.”¹⁰¹ Moreover, according to González Guerra, the tone of the radio program offended Cuban women by calling their men “sons of blank.”¹⁰² Yet insults of “communists” were of no offense to them.

It is difficult to ascertain how many Cuban athletes were tempted to defect in San Juan, since there was absolutely no conversation about it among them due to fear of the Cuban secret police, which had allegedly infiltrated the delegation.¹⁰³ But the pressure to defect was even exerted by Puerto Rican police at the Olympic Village, who constantly invited the Cubans to “begin their flight to freedom.”¹⁰⁴ Leaflets, handouts, and newspapers were taken to the village inviting the Cuban athletes to defect. Even priests approached some delegates persuading them to leave communist Cuba and stay in Puerto Rico, while at some games the loudspeakers announced—apparently false statements—that more Cuban athletes kept defecting. As if that was not enough, even during a bus trip from the Olympic Village to the Olympic pool there was pressure to defect. The bus driver made unplanned stops at the sport facilities of the University of Puerto Rico and later at a private house on Ponce de León Avenue

that had a sign reading "Refugio" (Shelter). The bus driver then opened the door of the bus and asked the passengers, "Doesn't anybody get off here?"¹⁰⁵

Invitation and pressure to defect were not the only "acts of aggression" against the Cuban delegation in Puerto Rico. There were also physically violent moments. For example, one member, Luis de Cárdenas, was attacked by a "paid agent." When the police came, they actually held De Cárdenas so that the "paid agent" could keep hitting him.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, during a basketball practice of the Cuban team at a private high school, Colegio Espíritu Santo, a group of *contrarrevolucionarios* provoked and attacked them, "forcing" the Cubans to fight back. At the end of the incident, a local policeman confirmed that the attack was provoked by "Cuban exiles."¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, the MPI upheld its sworn defense of the Cuban athletes when at a soccer match in the Baldrich neighborhood they got involved in a shoving match with a group of Cuban exiles.¹⁰⁸ On top of that, and more seriously, a car pulled into the Olympic Village, and two passengers "threatened" some Cuban delegates, who, reacting to the threat, made one of the aggressors drop a pistol.¹⁰⁹

This gun incident was not the only one involving firearms. José Llanusa indicated that on two occasions four individuals attempted to murder him. In the first attempt, the individuals were driving an Impala and held a rifle; in the second, the same individuals, now driving a Comet, possessed handguns.¹¹⁰ Reacting to these murder attempts, Llanusa denounced them as "exclusively guided by the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States." Additionally, he said that the Cuban exiles "were not directly responsible," implying that these individuals were more like puppets of the CIA who got paid to do their work.¹¹¹ But Llanusa stated that it was the constant provocations to defect—more than violent attacks—that constituted a "psychological war" against the Cuban delegation.¹¹²

Conclusion

The violence and hostility at the X CACG of 1966 in San Juan, more than reflecting Cold War tensions, was a real measure of East-versus-West competition. Cuba and Puerto Rico embodied Cold War rivalries between the Soviet bloc and the United States in the athletic field and in the streets of San Juan. Indeed, the incidents outlined above tell the story of how

Puerto Rico was the site of another major war-threatening moment in twentieth-century Caribbean and Central American history.

Moreover, a deeper issue for Latin American history is that these games proved the colonial condition of Puerto Rico. Puerto Ricans, while being the protagonists and hosts of the games, became de facto subalterns to the State Department and even the IOC due to the imposed granting of the visas to the Cubans. While the Puerto Ricans' intention was to prove to their Latin American and Caribbean neighbors that they were in fact autonomous enough to host these games, what actually became evident was that their alleged political modernization came with a costly prize: continued colonialism. The imposition of the visas against the wishes of the Puerto Rican authorities demonstrated that in Puerto Rico the ultimate control over its governance lay outside the island.

The MPI was clear about Puerto Rican colonialism, and that is why it was so active during these games and overall throughout these years. On the other hand, a growing sector of the pro-US-statehood *estadista* movement also noticed this blatant political subjugation and actively attacked the commonwealth. Puerto Rican senator Arturo Ortiz Toro openly declared that "Fidel Castro has ridiculed the Commonwealth government" at the X CACG. He went on to specify his point: "The ridicule of the Puerto Rican people consists in that making claims of sovereignty, invites the Cuban athletes with great fanfare, and when they get to barely 3 miles from our beaches, a simple order by a subaltern employee of the Coast Guard stops the Cuban vessel outside our shores. This is evidence that there is no Puerto Rican sovereignty."¹¹³

This *estadista* movement was well known for being anti-Castro and anticommunist, in addition to anticolonialist. While there are other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean that had similar opposition to Castro's regime and that followed the broken diplomatic policies of the United States with Cuba, the fact is that Puerto Rico is the only "country" to which the United States could do this legally, unilaterally, and without questions. Nonetheless, this colonial condition of Puerto Ricans did not impede them from participating in the global context during the Cold War, characterized as it was by subtle, yet volatile events.

Although the story of Central American and Caribbean Olympism has not received deserved attention in both historical scholarship and studies of contemporary politics, it is hoped that this chapter sheds light

on the real and compelling drama this region has faced. The Tenth Central American and Caribbean Games in San Juan were a premier example of Latin America and Caribbean Olympism that showed pressing and high-stakes diplomacy. Although Avery Brundage had to deal with more prominent issues during his IOC presidency, his many diplomatic maneuvers at this time show that he did pay enough attention to the Central American and Caribbean area.

Finally, when the games were over, Puerto Rico had finished in the third position overall, behind Mexico and Cuba—although they actually won more total medals than Cuba, they had fewer gold medals. This proved without a question that the Puerto Rican nation was still strong, competitive, and powerful in Latin American and Caribbean sport. Although this nationhood was colonial and subordinated, it was, nevertheless, real for many. The X CACG legitimized to Puerto Ricans the “progress” of Puerto Rican Olympism. All the obstacles to make Puerto Rico visible among the nations of the world had been conquered. From this moment on, amid persisting colonialism and Cold War conflicts, there was no looking back. Puerto Rican Olympism had been officially consolidated.

Notes

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2. John Hutchinson, “Cultural Nationalism and Moral Regeneration,” in *Nationalism*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 122–31, and Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

3. John MacAloon, “La pitada Olímpica,” in *Text, Play, and Story: The Construction and Reconstruction of Self and Society*, ed. Edward M. Bruner (Washington, DC: American Ethnological Society, 1984).

4. Félix R. Huertas González, *Deporte e identidad: Puerto Rico y su presencia deportiva internacional (1930–1950)* (San Juan: Terranova Editores, 2006).

5. This is best analyzed and shown in Laurent DuBois, *Soccer Empire: The World Cup and the Future of France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 50.

6. R.C. No. 8, “Resolución conjunta para crear el Comité Olímpico de Puerto Rico,” in *50 años de Olimpismo*, ed. Joaquín Martínez-Rousset (San Juan: Editorial Edil., 2003), 73–75.

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8. See José Trias Monge, *Puerto Rico: The Trials of the Oldest Colony in the World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997).

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10. See Efrén Rivera Ramos, *The Legal Construction of Identity: The Judicial and Social Legacy of American Colonialism in Puerto Rico* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2002).

11. Roberta J. Park, “‘Forget about That Pile of Papers’: Second World War Sport, Recreation and the Military on the Island of Puerto Rico,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 20, no. 1 (March 2003): 50–64, and Roberta J. Park, “From *la Bomba* to *Béisbol*: Sport and the Americanisation of Puerto Rico, 1898–1950,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 28, no. 17 (December 2011): 2575–93.

12. See James Dietz, *The Economic History of Puerto Rico: Institutional Change and Capitalist Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 86–99.

13. See Miñi Seijo Bruno, *La insurrección nacionalista en Puerto Rico, 1950* (San Juan: Editorial Edil, 1997).

14. See Trias Monge, *Puerto Rico*, 107–18, and Juan R. Torruella, “One Hundred Years of Solitude: Puerto Rico’s American Century,” in *Foreign in a Domestic Sense: Puerto Rico, American Expansion, and the Constitution*, ed. Christina Duffy Burnett and Burke Marshall (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 241–50.

15. William L. Ryan, “Puerto Rico, Once Poor, Is Prospering: Called Showcase of the Caribbean,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 14, 1962, A1. See also Dietz, *Economic History*, 240–310.

16. See Cesar J. Ayala and Rafael Bernabe, *Puerto Rico in the American Century: A History since 1898* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 202.

17. Jaime Plenn, "Surge movimiento para eliminar a Cuba," *El Mundo*, May 10, 1962, 37. According to Plenn, IOC member José de Jesús Clark Flores intended to travel to Jamaica for a meeting with the organizing committee but could not ensure that this topic would be covered. Plenn also stated that the recent visit by Brundage to Mexico was related to the Cuban situation but did not expand on it. Nevertheless, Plenn reported that Mexican sport leaders were confident that if such an exclusion were stated, Mexico would oppose it. He ended the article saying that former Cuban Olympic Committee members then in exile declared that the exclusion would not be based on political ideology but solely on the organization of the Cuban Olympic Committee, which was denounced as being an "organism of the Cuban state." I have not found more information on the matter. Only further research would provide more insight to fully understand the political and ideological reasons behind it and its connections to Latin American and Caribbean politics.

18. Jess Losada, "Caso de Cuba ante los Juegos Centroamericanos y del Caribe," *Boletín Deportivo, Unión Deportiva Cuba Libre* 2, no. 3 (April 1965): 1, 6, Section VI, Senator by Accumulation, Series 17, Miscellaneous Archive, Folder 273.3, Tenth CACG, Administration of Parks and Recreation, Archivo Fundación Luis Muñoz Marín, San Juan, Puerto Rico (hereafter AFLMM).

19. Letter to Avery Brundage, February 10, 1960, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, University of Illinois Archives, Urbana, IL (hereafter UIA).

20. Antonio Cañas, "Juegos Deportivos Centroamericanos y del Caribe," Section VI, Senator by Accumulation, Series 17, Miscellaneous Archive, Folder 273.3, Tenth CACG, Administration of Parks and Recreation, AFLMM.

21. Memoria X Juegos Centroamericanos y del Caribe, 11–25 de junio de 1966, Section VI, Senator by Accumulation, Series 17, Miscellaneous Archive, Folder 273.3, Tenth CACG, Administration of Parks and Recreation, AFLMM.

22. For a biography of Roberto Sánchez Vilella, see Celina Romany Siaca, *La verdadera historia de Roberto Sánchez Vilella* (San Juan: Ediciones Puerto, 2011).

23. I refer here to a significant group of Cuban exiles in Puerto Rico who were not only openly anti-Castro and anticommunist but violently active after 1967. Certainly not all Cuban exiles in Puerto Rico were violent anticommunists, but those who were had the backing of the Puerto Rican government. See José M. Atilos Osoria, "Pro-State Violence in Puerto Rico: Cuban and Puerto Rican Right-Wing Terrorism from the 1960s to the 1990s," *Socialism and Democracy* 26, no. 1 (March 2012): 127–42.

24. "Este Gobierno se opone decididamente a que venga un equipo cubano a Puerto Rico a participar en dichos juegos mientras el presente régimen cubano gobierna en aquella isla. No creemos que su presencia pueda servir propósito alguno sino que, por el contrario, tendría a crear una situación difícil e intolerable en el país." Draft of "Letter to the Governor" by Roberto Sánchez Vilella to Julio E. Mon-

gas, Delegación cubana a Juegos Centroamericanos—1966, April 17, 1964, Sección VI, Section VI, Senator by Accumulation, Series 17, Miscellaneous Archive, Folder 273.3, Tenth CACG, Administration of Parks and Recreation, AFLMM.

25. *Ibid.*

26. "Puerto Rico será libre por la lucha de su pueblo y la solidaridad de todos los pueblos de este continente y del mundo. . . . Puerto Rico será libre como lo será Vietnam del Sur, que está luchando contra el imperialismo norteamericano, y como lo serán Angola y Venezuela." As cited in letter from Sánchez Vilella to the governor, *ibid.*

27. "Sátrapa": a subordinate official. *Traidorzuelo*: a sort of insignificant traitor.

28. See Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico*, 160, 167.

29. *Ibid.*, 227.

30. "Puerto Rico Ignored Nikita's Colonial Tag," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 25, 1960, 6.

31. Victor Riesel, "Pekin's Agents in Puerto Rico," *Los Angeles Times*, April 8, 1964, A5.

32. Draft of "Letter to the Governor" by Roberto Sánchez Vilella to Julio E. Monagas, Delegación cubana a Juegos Centroamericanos—1966, April 17, 1964, Sección VI, Section VI, Senator by Accumulation, Series 17, Miscellaneous Archive, Folder 273.3, Tenth CACG, Administration of Parks and Recreation, AFLMM.

33. *Ibid.*, 2–3.

34. "Olympic Recognition of Cuba Clouds Puerto Rican Games," *New York Times*, August 29, 1965, S4.

35. Rule 25 of the Olympic Charter basically states that there must be no political interference or discrimination by any NOC or at any Olympic competition. For a detailed chronology of events of this controversy in the case of Puerto Rico, see letter to the IOC, September 22, 1956, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 146, UIA.

36. Joaquín Martínez Rousset, "Visas para los cubanos," *El Mundo*, February 22, 1965, 17.

37. Phrased "problema de gobierno a gobierno" and "pintado de rojo" in *ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*

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

40. As quoted in Juan Cepero, "El problema de P.R. es muy complicado: Brundage," *El Mundo*, February 24, 1965, 13.

41. R. Santiago Sosa, "Secretario de Estado de PR Dr. Lastra reafirma decisión de no pedir visas para cubanos," *El Mundo*, February 25, 1965, 41.

42. *Ibid.*

43. Juan Cepero, "Declara don Julio Enrique Monagas 'Puerto Rico no le ha ofrecido a nadie la sede de los X Juegos,'" *El Mundo*, February 22, 1965, 17.

44. Joaquín Martínez Rousset, "Este cohete no llegó a la luna," *El Mundo*, February 24, 1965, 13.

45. "Brundage Is Critical of Excluding Cuba Athletes," *Santa Barbara News-Press*, February 24, 1965, E-5.
46. Juan Cepero, "Sec General de FAIA promete ayudar a resolver caso de PR y los X Juegos," *El Mundo*, February 26, 1965, 41.
47. "Caracas Resolution," Caracas, March 16, 1965, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.
48. Letter to Mr. Avery Brundage, March 30, 1965, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.
49. Confidential letter to Avery Brundage, n.d., Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.
50. Letter addressed to ODECABE, COPUR, and Comité Organizador de los X Juegos Centroamericanos y del Caribe, n.d., Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.
51. Letter to Mr. A. Illueca Sibauste, April 15, 1965, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.
52. The CACG in Kingston was also the scenario for conflict between Puerto Ricans and Cubans reflecting Cold War and Caribbean politics. For example, a fight broke out in a Cuba versus Puerto Rico baseball game on August 14, 1962, at Sabina Park, after the three groups (Puerto Ricans, Cuban athletes, and Cuban exiles) exchanged politically charged insults. Needless to say, the events at Kingston constituted a charged and direct preamble to the heated situation in San Juan four years later. For more on the Kingston Games of 1962, see chapter 9 in Antonio Sotomayor, "Playing the Nation in a Colonial Island: Sport, Culture, and Politics in Puerto Rico," PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2012.
53. Jamaica Cabinet Submission (JCS), "Entry of Cubans into Jamaica," January 10, 1962, cited in Jana K. Lipman, "Between Guantánamo and Montego Bay: Cuba, Jamaica, Migration and the Cold War, 1959–1962," *Immigrants and Minorities* 21, no. 3 (November 2002): 37.
54. *Ibid.*, 32–33.
55. Letter to Avery Brundage, September 5, 1965, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.
56. Letter to Ing. José de J. Clark Flores, November 17, 1965, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA. See also Informe semanal No. 41, October 5–13, 1965, Administración de Parques y Recreos Públicos, Fondo Oficina del Gobernador, Serie Informes Semanales de los Jefes de Agencias de Gobierno al Gobernador de Puerto Rico, 1965–1968, Archivo General de Puerto Rico. It seems also probable that Rieckehoff Sampayo had a role in making Puerto Rican Olympic and sport institutions change their policy regarding the Cubans' visas. See Raúl Mayo Santana, *El juguete sagrado: Germán Rieckehoff Sampayo* (San Juan: Editorial Plaza Mayor, 2000).
57. Juan Manuel Ocasio, "Lastra: Hands Off Policy for Cubans," *San Juan Star*, November 11, 1965.
58. Cable to Mr. Torregrosa, December 5, 1965, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.

59. As presented in Memorandum, December 11, 1965, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.
60. Letter to Felicio Torregrosa, December 13, 1965, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.
61. Cable to Felicio Torregrosa, December 15, 1965, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA, and then later in an official letter, January 5, 1966, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.
62. Letter to Avery Brundage, December 15, 1965, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.
63. *Ibid.*
64. *Ibid.*
65. Letter to Mr. K. Andrianov, Comité Olympique d'U.R.S.S. Skaternyj 4, Moscow, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.
66. See Ayala and Bernabe, *Puerto Rico*, 226–29.
67. This letter was actually written by Narciso Gabell Martínez, mission chief of the MPI in Cuba, for *Granma*. "Los atletas cubanos no estarán solos: Denuncia el MPI las maniobras del imperialismo contra Cuba en los Juegos Centroamericanos," *Granma*, March 24, 1966, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 85, UIA.
68. Letter to Avery Brundage, February 22, 1966, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.
69. Letter to Monagas, March 21, 1966, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.
70. See Mayo Santana, *El juguete sagrado*, 180–81.
71. "Cuba Accuses U.S. of Attempt at Blackmail," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 30, 1966, B10.
72. *Ibid.*; Morris W. Rosenberg, "'Threats' at the Games Here," *San Juan Star*, July 1, 1966, 1, 14; and "Cuba Rejects U.S. Visa Plan for Games in Puerto Rico," *New York Times*, April 23, 1966, 23.
73. "Lo asociado le impide ser libre . . .," "Temas del día," Cuban newspaper clipping found in Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 85, UIA.
74. Personal report by Avery Brundage, June 30, 1966, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.
75. The alleged political interference was a "so-called 'Olympic Oath' and the hymn of the 1st National Sport Games" and other politically oriented statements made by some sports leaders as published in *Granma*, October 21, 1965. Letter to Comité Olímpico Cubano, February 16, 1966, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 85, UIA.
76. Letter to Avery Brundage, March 30, 1966, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.
77. *Ibid.*
78. Meeting of the Executive Board of the IOC, April 21–24, 1966, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 84, UIA.

79. Cable to Avery Brundage from Moscou URSSGOVT, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.

80. Ramón Rodríguez, "Revelan Yate MPI salió tras cubanos," *El Mundo*, June 10, 1966, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.

81. Rafael López Sosa, "Acusa a E.U. de interferir con cubanos," *El Mundo*, June 13, 1966.

82. See transcription of interview with Rieckeboff Sampayo in Mayo Santana, *El juguete sagrado*, 176–80.

83. "Este barco es propiedad del gobierno de Cuba, el cual se ha incautado de la propiedad de muchos de los cubanos que viven en Puerto Rico, sin el debido procedimiento de ley. Si este barco entra a las aguas de Puerto Rico y, bajo la ley de almirantazgo, un cubano inicia una acción contra el gobierno de Cuba, este barco queda arrestado en aseguramiento de sentencia y van a pasar muchos años en que el mismo va a estar en Puerto Rico bajo arresto." As quoted in Mayo Santana, *El juguete sagrado*, 179.

84. Cable sent to Avery Brundage from Moscou, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.

85. "Estamos listos para bajar y dejamos el barco aquí." As quoted by Rieckeboff Sampayo in his interview with Mayo Santana. Mayo Santana, *El juguete sagrado*, 179.

86. Cable to Avery Brundage, June 10, 1966, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.

87. *Ibid.*

88. Rafael López Rosas, "Acusa a E.U. de interferir con cubanos," *El Mundo*, June 13, 1966.

89. "Interferir, entorpecer y retrasar," *ibid.*

90. "Leading the Chant," *San Juan Star*, June 1966. Courtesy Carlos Uriarte González.

91. The only political "incident" at the opening ceremonies consisted of the Dominican Republic flag being hoisted only halfway by their NOC president, in protest of the presence of the international peacekeeping forces in the Dominican Republic.

92. For a complete overview of the X CACG, including scores, teams, sports, and other statistical information, see Uriarte González, *80 años de acción*, 111–37.

93. Memoria X Juegos Centroamericanos y del Caribe, June 11–25, 1966, Section VI, Senator by Accumulation, Series 17, Miscellaneous Archive, Folder 273.3. Tenth CACG, Administration of Parks and Recreation, AFLMM.

94. Rafael Collazo, "Atleta cubano pide asilo política P.R.," *El Día*, June 14, 1966, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.

95. "Alega régimen Castro puso ELA en ridículo," *El Mundo*, June 22, 1966, 19, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.

96. Guillermo Hernández, "Creen que está incomunicada atleta cubana quiere quedarse en P.R.," *El Imparcial*, June 22, 1966, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.

97. Salvador Guzmán, "Llanuza dice frustra 2 atentados a su vida," *El Imparcial*, June 24, 1966, 3, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.

98. *Ibid.*

99. Letter from Dr. Carlos Lastra to Salvador Rodríguez Aponte, Police Superintendent, June 3, 1966, Office of the Governor Collection, Weekly Reports of the Chiefs of Agencies of the Government to the Governor of Puerto Rico, General Archive of Puerto Rico.

100. This is according to the COC's president Manuel González Guerra, which José de J. Clark certified as true and accurate. See letter from Manuel González Guerra to Emilio Huyke, June 14, 1966, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.

101. "Operación Salto a la Verja de la Libertad."

102. "Hijos de tal cosa." Letter from Manuel González Guerra to Emilio Huyke, June 14, 1966, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.

103. This is according to defector Juan Pablo Vega in an interview after his defection. See Ismael Fernández, "Revelan hay agentes secretos delegación cubana," *El Día*, June 14, 1966, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.

104. Letter from Manuel González Guerra to Emilio Huyke, June 14, 1966, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.

105. *Ibid.*

106. *Ibid.*

107. *Ibid.*

108. Miranda Antonio, "Alega el MPI tergiversó incidente," *El Mundo*, June 21, 1966, 15, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.

109. Letter from Manuel González Guerra to Emilio Huyke, June 14, 1966, 3, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.

110. Salvador Guzmán, "Llanuza dice frustra 2 atentados a su vida," *El Imparcial*, June 24, 1966, 5, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.

111. *Ibid.*

112. *Ibid.*

113. "Senador Ortiz Toro alega régimen Castro puso ELA en ridículo," *El Mundo*, June 22, 1966, 19, Avery Brundage Collection, Series No. 26/20/37, Box 199, UIA.