The Nationalist Meanings of 20th Century Olympic Games:
Conflicting National Identities and Memories in Mexico, Germany, and America

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Introduction: Nationalism and the Olympics

“Wars break out because nations misunderstand each other. We shall not have peace until the prejudices which now separate the different races shall have been outlived. To attain this end, what better means than to bring the youth of all countries periodically together for amicable trials of muscular strength and agility?” – Pierre de Coubertin

The modern Olympic Games were established in 1896 by Pierre de Coubertin in hopes of encouraging world peace and unity through sport. Although this ambitious goal has not been reached, his idealized view of this Olympic spirit remains central to the Olympics of 2018, which still attempt to foster global “mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity, and fair play.” Despite Coubertin’s hopes for global peace to overcome national politics, political factors have long dominated the Games through the selection of host nations and the individual political statements made by athletes. The most profound shows of political nationalism, though, were created by host nations hoping to show the world a new image through the Games. For example, the first Athens Games of 1896 were a “political football tossed about by liberals and conservatives as they maneuvered for control of the Greek government” and for control over views of the Greek nation. And so the first modern Olympics became representative of frequent struggles over how to define the identity of the host nation, and this trend continued into the 20th century.

A host nation can be defined as an “imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign,” in the words of nationalism scholar Benedict Anderson. The nation is limited because it does not represent all of mankind and is sovereign because it aims to act as a sovereign state. Nations are imagined because members of nations will not know many other members, “yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.”

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5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
nation comes from “a deep, horizontal comradeship” that unites the nation despite inequality and multiple strains of nationalism. This comradeship helps members imagine themselves as part of the nation, and this imagined community informs the way its members live and relate to one another. Therefore, a nation is also a form of identity that helps members recognize themselves and others, so a nation must embody not only imagination but also a culture.

This nationalism founded upon the cultural roots of the nation “exists in and through the language we speak, the public symbols we acknowledge, the history and literature we were taught…the sporting activities we enjoy, and the news bulletins we enjoy.” Therefore, members of nations express their sense of nationality every day through similar activities like visiting museums, reading the news, “and attending international sporting occasions.” Accordingly, the modern media use major sporting events, like the Olympics, as a means to define nationalism and to remember the meaning of the host nation’s “imagined political community.”

These descriptions of cultural nationalism have long needed the inclusion of the press and their tools, such as news bulletins, to shape views of nations. According to Anderson, the culture of imagined communities was communicated through a new language, created through the combination of mass media and capitalist values, used to imagine and to unite modern nations. And this common language was shaped and spread “by the press…tourism, trade unions, and political organizations.” Therefore, host nations used forms of media as diverse as architecture and television “to introduce [themselves] to a global audience” and to create a common national identity recognized and approved by the international press. These different forms of media also allowed modern nations to create a

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7 Anderson, 6.
8 Ross Poole, Nation and Identity (London: Routledge, 2009), 11.
9 Ibid., 13.
10 Ibid.
12 Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities, 6.
13 Ibid., 46.
14 Hutchinson, 131.
“brand” that stood out in the “global market of competing nationalisms.” These brands were “deliberate national identities constructed through the popular media [that connected] the nation to a specific set of values, histories, and regimes of affect.” In addition to linking views of the nation and the media, this national branding was used by nations to invent idealized views of the nation and to establish favorable international relations. But nations had to appeal to the modern media to gain this global recognition.

Media involvement and press coverage evolved drastically since the first modern Olympics. In the 1896 Athens Games, the Russian representative to the International Olympic Committee, Aleksander Butkowsky, said that “‘Our press find the question of physical training unworthy of mention,’” and an editorialist in “London’s Spectator ridiculed the Games as an ‘athletic whim.’” However, the global press became an authoritative voice determining the success or failure of these idealized views of the nation. Through newspapers and television, the modern press popularized the Olympics and evaluated the national identities of host nations. For example, over 14 million American viewers watched the 1972 Munich Olympics Closing Ceremony, and over 34 million viewers watched the 1996 Atlanta Olympics Closing Ceremony. The Beijing Olympics of 2008 were the most watched Olympics on record: after ten days of competition with 4.4 billion television viewers worldwide, the Beijing Olympics were viewed by roughly two-thirds of the world’s population. Thousands of newspaper and magazine articles worldwide also covered the Games, and the Olympics became prominent enough in the global press to occupy several covers of world-renowned publications.

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17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., 22.
19 Guttman, The Olympics, 16.
Differing groups within host nations, however, did not always accept these national attempts to show an idealized and unified nation to the global press. Just as the nation is not the only form of culture or identity, especially in the modern world, the nation is rarely a unified body and is “subject to change and political contestation.”

The relationship between national identities and “other collective identities such as class and religion” are often characterized by conflict, especially under global scrutiny. Therefore, dissenting groups tried to either broadcast their own idealized view of the nation or draw international support for varying causes or injustices that national organizers ignored as they sought to create an apparent sense of national unity. But both dissenting and mainstream groups recognized the Olympics as a mass media event that could be used to re-invent nationalism on the global stage and unify nationalism at home. Ultimately, the international media provided confirmation or denial for one of these opposing narratives that was then reflected inward to the nation. Three Olympic Games in the 20th century were especially representative of these conflicting views of the nation: the 1968 Mexico City Olympics, the 1972 Munich Olympics, and the 1996 Atlanta Olympics.

In the Mexico City Games, different ethnicities and Mexican social classes continued a national debate that had defined “nationalism” in competing narratives since the Mexican Revolution. The Mexican social elite sought to convince the world that Mexico was a safe, modern nation, but Mexican activists used demonstrations to challenge this idealized vision and to critique Mexico’s authoritarian government. Just ten days before the Opening Ceremony, the Mexican government approved the use of force to halt these protests, resulting in the “Tlatelolco Massacre” that killed over 200 activists. With this threat of an alternate strain of nationalism squashed, the Mexican elite gained full control

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22 Poole, 16.
23 Hutchinson, 116.
25 Claire Brewster and Keith Brewster, Representing the Nation: Sport and Spectacle in Post-Revolutionary Mexico (New York: Routledge, 2010), 100.
over the local press and released reports to the international press that ignored this violence. By shaping the media coverage of the Games, the Mexican government hoped to solidify positive views of the Mexican nation and to gain broad support in the international press.

Like the Mexico City Games in 1968, the Munich Olympics of 1972 generated differing views of the West German host nation. These Olympics were to be what West German Chancellor Willy Brandt called the “Happy Games,” which would counter the Nazi propaganda of the 1936 Olympics and the racist and anti-Semitic views the Nazi era Games had promoted. However, radical, anti-Israeli terrorists disrupted the “Happy Games” through the tragic attacks that became known as the Black September Massacre. The international media therefore recognized the Games more for this terrorist attack and for the memory of the anti-Semitic tendencies of the 1936 Berlin Olympics than for West Germany’s renewed place in the world. The international press compared these Olympics to “Hitler’s Games” at every turn and promoted skeptical global views of postwar West Germany, and this negative coverage also inspired internal attacks on the idealized image of a unified West German nation.

Finally, the Atlanta Games of 1996 also resembled the Mexico City and Munich Games as the host city tried to represent a progressive and international view of the American South to overcome the region’s violent history, including the Civil War, segregation, and lingering racial tensions. The idealized views of the New South and of the American nation that Atlanta Olympics organizers were eager to display were challenged from the start of the Games with questions about the New South’s racial equality and economic success. Conflicts within Georgia developed between urban and rural communities, and between black and white residents, who held different views of Atlanta’s racially

charged, Confederate past. While the pipe bombing terror attack in Atlanta during the Games barely undermined Atlanta’s international credibility, excessive commercialism and lingering monuments to the Confederacy provoked international debates that defeated idealized views of the New South and American nations.

In each of these cases, the Olympics offered opportunities to validate one view of the nation, but there were always other views and critiques of the nation. In the Mexico City and Atlanta Games, these conflicting views of the host nation developed internally, and the international press validated or defeated one of these views; in the Munich Games, the international press struck down the unified, idealized view of the post-Nazi German nation and inspired internal fractures. These narratives relied on the media for a broad distribution of the key themes, but the media could also question or turn against the national narrative – much like internal dissidents might reject the “official” narrative. Therefore, the international press ultimately sanctioned or rebutted idealized views of the Mexican, German, and American nations after defining Olympic conflicts at each Games. The Olympics exemplify the battle between competing narratives present in all nationalisms and offer a distinctive example of how international sports become entangled with nationalist debates.

“Everything is Possible with Peace”: How International Media Sanctioned the Tlatelolco Massacre and Elite Mexican Views of the Nation in the 1968 Mexico City Olympics

I. Introduction

The year 1968 will be remembered for its crises of nationalism around the world. Differing strains of nationalism emerged as nations like Czechoslovakia were invaded by the Soviets. The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. highlighted the impact of race relations on shifting American nationalism. In Paris, student protests for education reform transformed into violent, revolutionary protests that rocked the stability of French nationalism. These conflicts challenged nations’ political stability and thus shaped alternative views of national identities. In many ways, these national divides were reflected in the 1968 Mexico City Games – from the black power salute of Tommie Smith and John Carlos, to the Czech gymnast Vera Caslavska turning away from the Soviet anthem, to the banning of South Africa from the Games for apartheid practices. While these events at the 1968 Olympics were symbolic of changing nationalisms around the world, nationalism within the host nation, Mexico, was particularly contested by opposing groups that hoped to use the Olympics to define the meaning of the nation.

Alternate views of the Mexican nation that had been developing in the twentieth century both attempted to win approval through the 1968 Mexico City Olympics. Since the Mexican Revolution, different ethnicities and social classes of Mexicans had defined “nationalism” differently, but both groups were eager to use the Olympics to re-invent views of the Mexican nation at home and abroad.

The Mexican social elite sought to “support the claim that, in the aftermath of its revolutionary wars, a socially unified and prosperous Mexico had effectively arrived to the developed world.”

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33 Ibid., 119.
34 Ibid., 156.
35 Ibid., 221.
36 Brewster and Brewster, Representing the Nation, 100.
37 Castañeda, 22.
These Mexican elites, including Mexican Olympic Committee President Carlos Padilla Becerra and Mexican President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, used the Olympics to solidify images of Mexico as a modern, peaceful nation at home and abroad as shown in the official Olympic slogan of “Everything is Possible with Peace.”38 Through historic forms of media, like architecture, and new media technology, like television, mass media were broadcast worldwide, allowing Mexican propaganda to be reflected within and outside Mexico to solidify these views.39

However, the Mexican activists, largely represented by Mexican students and workers unions, were eager to use the Olympics to air their grievances. Through demonstrations in the months leading up to the Games, they disrupted this idealized vision with protests meant to draw attention to Mexico’s “authoritarian political system” and the large expenditures on the Olympics that could have been used to reform local education and public services.40 Additionally, these activists “demanded dismissal of police officials and disbandment of the riot police that they accused of brutality in clashes during the summer.”41 The demands of the students expanded throughout the fall “with little organization” to include a plethora of other political concerns.42 Activists were bold enough to ridicule President Ordaz “whose office is normally considered above public criticism,” as well.43 These students hoped to use the Games as a platform to draw international support for their different view of the nation and to bring change. Even though these activists held peaceful protests, the Mexican government saw them as such a threat to their idealized vision of the Mexican nation that its members sanctioned the use of force to shutdown these protests days before the Opening Ceremony.44 Because of government control over local media and international perceptions, there was no external pressure to recognize the alternate

39 Anderson, 135.
40 Flaherty, 16.
43 “University of Mexico Occupied by Soldiers.”
44 Flaherty, 46.
views of the Mexican nation espoused by activist students and workers or the government-led violence against protestors. Therefore, this critical view of the official nationalist narrative failed to gain much attention or support within or beyond Mexico.

During the Games, international coverage of the Tlatelolco Massacre defined the outcome of this clash and solidified the elites’ view of the Mexican nation. After the Games, international perceptions determined how the Tlatelolco Massacre and Games were remembered. In each phase of the media’s portrayal of the Olympics, it was clear that international perceptions of the Games shaped domestic Mexican nationalism. Mexican nationalism was refined by the campaign to promote the 1968 Mexico City Olympics as a symbol and example of how Mexico had become a modern, unified nation. These Games also acted as a catalyst for critical strains of nationalism to emerge led by students and activists. However, international media attention effectively sanctioned the elites’ idealized definition of Mexican nationalism, despite their use of force in the Tlatelolco Massacre to silence these critical views of the nation.

II. Setting Expectations for the 1968 Mexico City Olympics

As acknowledged in statements from Mexican government officials and newspaper accounts, the official Olympic logo, the Cultural Olympics program, and the architecture of Olympic stadiums, the Mexican Organizing Committee hoped to show “a nation that proudly embraced its pre-Columbian heritage while simultaneously continuing its march towards progress.”45 This organizing committee, “a microcosm of elite society,” used diverse propaganda to convince international journalists as well as the Mexican people of their elite view of a peaceful, modern Mexican nation before the Games began.46 This official Mexican nationalism was promoted at the expense of alternate strains of nationalism like that of activist students.

45 Brewster and Brewster, 58.
46 Ibid.
Newspaper accounts leading up to the 1968 Olympics portrayed the Games as an honor for Mexico’s growing international presence and an opportunity to further showcase Mexico’s progressive future to the world. For example, an editorial in a major Mexican newspaper, *El Nacional*, noted that staging the Olympic Games “confirms, yet again, the international prestige of our country.” As the first Latin American country to host the Olympics, Mexico was eager to impress the international community and represent the increasing modernity of the nation and region. Similarly, Cuellar’s article for another Mexican newspaper, *El Universal*, proclaimed that “words cannot express what it will mean for Mexico to prepare and to celebrate the 1968 Olympiad. It is not just a sporting triumph for Mexico, but also a moral, economic, and cultural triumph.” Again, these Games represented a chance for Mexico to show off its economic success and cultural unity to the world, which perfectly aligned with the Mexican organizer’s idealized view of the Mexican nation.

While this official view of the Olympics was supported in many major papers in Mexico, the elite political and economic figures of Mexico were especially keen to use the Olympics to convey this idealized view of the Mexican nation to the world. As early as 1965, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, the 1968 Mexican President and former Minister of the Interior, promised the international press that “all the eyes of the world would be on Mexico in 1968,” and he hoped that “Mexicans would respond to their responsibilities in providing a warm and dignified reception for all visitors.” By calling on Mexicans to host these international visitors, Ordaz was also promoting the unity and generous culture he hoped would typify the Mexican nation in the eyes of the international press. In 1968, he similarly claimed that “Mexico is going to be a great amphitheater for sportspeople throughout the world…it will be a magnificent testing ground for Mexico.” In addition to hoping this “testing ground” could

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successfully portray a modern, peaceful vision of Mexico to international visitors, Ordaz hoped that these visitors could provide tourism and economic benefits to unite the Mexican people. Ordaz saw these Games not only as an opportunity to show the world an idealized view of Mexico but also to enforce this view within the Mexican nation itself. Avery Brundage, the president of the International Olympic Committee, further endorsed this idealized vision of Mexican modernity and unity by saying that Mexico would “fulfill its Olympic obligations…and will say at the end of the Games that they were the best investment it ever made.” This 1966 statement from Brundage confirmed that Mexico could live up to international expectations and could improve the nation by hosting these Games, even while overcoming activist complaints that Mexico spent too much to host the Games. These official statements from the I.O.C. and the Mexican government encouraged the international press to see the Mexico City Olympics as a national achievement and an international experience.

While the international press did not always ignore alternate national narratives, like that of the students and activists, their coverage of these events usually followed the government’s statements meant to minimize conflicts, which also promoted the elites’ idealized view of the Mexican nation. Several reports of unrest in August were covered in New York Times articles, one of which mentioned that the student protests had spread to Jalapa and Villahermosa and had resulted in less than ten deaths. Instead of condemning the Mexican government or nation, though, this article followed the Mexican government’s story that “the demonstrations arising from the demands were stimulated by Communist agitators who plotted the insurrection from outside Mexico” and noted the Mayor of Mexico City had withdrawn all troops from a calm Mexico City, all of which shifted blame for violence away from the government and allowed them to keep up their idealized modern, peaceful

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51 Campos Bravo, “Reconocen el Esfuerzo del Pueblo Mexicano.”
vision. Another New York Times article noted that the Mexican government and Olympic organizing committee were concerned by student protests that “hit the Government where it is most vulnerable…by threatening the picture of calm and stability the Government wants to present to the outside.” However, the article’s title of “Mexico Keeps Up a Calm Exterior” summed up the tone of the article that Mexico was still able to “project to the world a stable and peaceful society” despite these protests. The Washington Post’s coverage of these same August riots discredited activists and students by remarking that when asked individually what their slogans of “1968, the Year of the Olympic Riot Police” and “Olympic Record: Mass Killing” represented, the activists “had little to say besides ‘We don’t want the Olympics.’”

Most articles written closer to the start of the Games only described political stability, even as student demonstrations grew more serious. For example, an October article in the New York Times noted that “the Olympics still seem to have the wholehearted support of most people, and visitors will find them friendly and eager to please.” This article even focused on the balloons and billboards lining the roads rather than any mention of the student protests. Similarly, a Chicago Tribune article only days before the Opening Ceremonies portrayed the Olympics as “modernistic” and a “moment of glory” – both sentiments that reflected official Mexican nationalism instead of protests.


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54 “Mexican Student Protests Spread to 2 Other Cities.”
56 Ibid.
58 Giniger, “Mexico Keeps Up a Calm Exterior.”
60 Ibid.
The official logo for these Games harkened to the same idealized view of the Mexican nation as modern and united. Mexican architect and designer Ramírez Vazquez created the logo of the Mexico Games to “portray a combination of past and present” and to show Mexico’s impressive early origins as well as its modern culture.61 He chose an ancient Huichol tribe design featuring concentric circles of black and white patterns that fit the popular Op Art movement of the late 1960s and were “a visual portrayal of the country’s successful integration of its ethnic past with its modern future.”62 By appealing to the international elite and fostering the Mexican elites’ views of a unified nation, Vazquez helped to promote the official, idealized nationalism of Mexico through the Olympics.

Furthermore, the Cultural Olympics (or “Cultural Olympiad”) was revived by the Mexican Organizing Committee to further the elites’ view of Mexican nationalism by presenting the nation’s “contemporary image to the world and…promot[ing] friendship and fraternity among all the peoples of the earth” through this festival that joined arts and sports.63 As noted by the Mexican Olympic Committee’s public relations director, Roberto Casellas, at an annual dinner of the British/Mexican Society, “On this occasion, Mexico wishes to show its true image to the world. We want to do away with the picture of the Indian sleeping his eternal ‘siesta’… we want to make known our progress in the fields of science and technology…we want to show the inspired works of our artists.”64 Thus, the Cultural Olympiad gave Mexico the chance to show off these modern aspects of Mexican culture through a year-long program that attracted 97 countries to participate.65

In particular, the Exhibition of Selected Works of World Art was coordinated by the Mexican Organizing Committee to further this idealized vision of the Mexican nation. The Mexican Organizing Committee wrote that they were guided “by the same fundamental and inspiring idea that characterized

61 Brewster and Brewster, 58.
62 Ibid., 59.
64 Brewster and Brewster, 61.
The Games of the XIX Olympiad: the possibility of attainting peace among all nations of the world,” when organizing this exhibition. The Mexican government and elites not only tried to encourage global peace through the art exhibitions of the Cultural Olympiad, but they also used these exhibits to demonstrate how the Mexican nation could fit into a peaceful, modern world through focuses on American art and modern art. For example, the Mexican Olympic Committee arranged several sections for American art, such as an “Art of the Americas” section including works from North and South America and a separate “small but valuable collection of pre-Hispanic goldwork from Peru, Colombia, Panama, Costa Rica, and Mexico.” This smaller goldwork collection represented Mexican heritage, but it also “illustrated the American peoples’ high level of skill in working with metals,” showing off the modern skills apparent in ancient Mexican artwork. The Mexican Organizing Committee also noted that including Mexico in this global exhibition was “doubly important” because it advertised “the magnificent selection of its great art treasures to visitors” and drew tourists to the National Museum of Anthropology, “a panorama showing the stages of development of a highly creative people.” Similarly, the modern art collection of the Cultural Olympiad represented the idealized vision of the Mexican nation held by the elites. This modern art collection was the largest art exhibit, featuring over one hundred paintings and twenty sculptures, that “reflected the trends of many artists who have given a new dimension to our century.” The Latin American modern paintings also particularly showed “a vital confrontation with the current art movement of the region,” again proving that Latin America, and especially Mexico, could keep up with modern trends.

And this cultural presentation had the desired effect of promoting the elites’ idealized view of the nation, as evidenced by the words of Avery Brundage, President of the International Olympic

66 Mexico City Organizing Committee of the Games, “The Cultural Olympiad,” 51.
67 Ibid., 121.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., 120.
70 Ibid., 171.
71 Ibid.
Committee: “In the history of the Olympic Games, it will always be remembered that Mexico, a relatively young country, first opened the way to a return to the purity, beauty and simplicity of the ancient Olympic Games.”\(^\text{72}\) Other foreign accounts, like that of the *Los Angeles Times*, similarly described the Cultural Olympics as “the most successful ever staged...leaving Mexico a heightened sense of national pride and accomplishment.”\(^\text{73}\)

Finally, the physical architecture used in the 1968 Olympic Games was used to symbolized idealized Mexican modernity. Architecture acted as a form of media because “the host country utilized symbols and rituals...like the design of the Games to shape the individual character of their Olympic Games.”\(^\text{74}\) Mexico City saw its outdated architecture as a representation of its outdated national image, so the Mexican Organizing Committee was especially anxious to present a more modern image in line with their idealized view of the nation.\(^\text{75}\) Impressive physical buildings astounded international visitors and showed off the new Mexican nationalism abroad, but the buildings also served Mexican nationalism at home by uniting people through spaces that shared distinctive cultural and historical traditions.\(^\text{76}\)

To achieve a unified, modern image, Rodríguez Kuri was responsible for the “total design” campaign that “downplayed the heterogeneity of existing infrastructure” by inscribing each building with variations of the Olympic logo and painting the pavement around these facilities.\(^\text{77}\) These inscriptions and decorations were cost-effective measures to update Mexican buildings and to create a sense of unity between new and old buildings. The Mexican Olympic Committee also constructed new

\(^{72}\) Mexico City Organizing Committee of the Games, “The Cultural Olympiad,” 4.


\(^{75}\) Castañeda, 101.


\(^{77}\) Castañeda, 102.
buildings like Félix Candela’s Sports Palace, “the most critically acclaimed of Mexico’s Olympic venues [that embodied] the media’s centrality to the production of Olympic infrastructure.”

Candela’s Sports Palace amazed international reporters and represented Mexico’s new nationalism through a “contemporary image.” For example, reporters from the Chicago Tribune noted that the Opening Ceremony will be held in “a modernistic saucer which is a perfect blend of the new and old Mexico” in reference to the Sports Palace. Brundage also called the Sports Palace “excellent” after his inspection of the facilities.

Finally, the Mexican government led a design program supervising everything from “souvenir ash trays to a new visual means of traffic direction” that symbolized modern Mexican designs and technology. As the Olympic Committee had hoped, these new buildings and designs convinced international spectators of Mexico’s new national image. Joseph Richards of the Los Angeles Times wrote in praise of Mexico’s Olympic structures, “gone forever was the last vestige of Mexico’s mañana image in the eyes of the rest of the world.”

By winning over international journalists, the Mexican elites sought to establish control over the alternate strain of nationalism promoted by student activists through peaceful demonstrations.

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78 Castañeda, 101.
83 Joseph, “Mexico Basks in Olympic Afterglow.”
While these students and workers did not gain as much attention, the Mexican elites still considered them a threat to their idealized views of the Mexican nation. The Tlatelolco Massacre in early October was the climactic point of conflict between the elites and the student activists; this event grew out of the government’s desire to definitively stop activist demonstrations, to secure unity within the nation, and to gain confirmation of their idealized view of the Mexican nation on the global stage.

III. Conflicting Views of the Mexican Nation Clash in the Tlatelolco Massacre

Late afternoon heat drifted over the Tlatelolco neighborhood of Mexico City as 5 o’clock came and went on October 2, 1968. Where Cortés slaughtered 40,000 Aztecs in the final battle for Mexico in the sixteenth century, the seemingly benign stucco walls of the 50 apartment complexes of the Nonoalco-Tlatelolco public housing complex now stood – soon to witness another turning point in Mexican nationalism. Mexican protestors “led by mostly middle-class university and high-school students” hung from balconies and out of windows of these crowded apartments and spilled out into the Plaza de las Tres Culturas. Holding “many banners and placards,” swells of protestors lurched with anticipation as activist leaders perched on a third floor balcony to announce a peaceful response to the Mexican government’s previous shows of force. The government’s presence could be seen at the edges of the crowd even then, where armed Mexican police and army members who were stationed to monitor the meeting “took abuse from the students with a smile” – at first.

As the meeting progressed nearing 5:45PM, the crowd of 5,000 continued to grow with the added presence of allied “railway workers, petrol workers, telephonists and electricity workers” and

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86 Rodda, “Trapped at Gunpoint.” Flaherty, 3.
87 Rodda, “Trapped at Gunpoint.” Flaherty, 3.
88 Elena Poniatowska, La Noche de Tlatelolco (México City, Mexico: Era Publishers, 1971), 166.
88 Rodda.
their hoots and hollers.89 The applause and excitement swiftly died, though, when two helicopters circled overhead, “one from the police, one from the military.”90 As the helicopters circled like vultures hovering over their prey, students shifted nervously among whispers of impending violence.91

Suddenly, two bright green flashes “shot up from behind the church” piercing the sky as it neared a red sunset.92 As student leaders urged their followers “Don’t run, my friends, don’t run, we are safe!” many did run, converting the Plaza de las Tres Culturas into “a living hell” smelling of fear and sweat.93 As the air “filled with gunfire,” no one could be sure who was shooting or who shot first.94 While “at least some of the students came to the meeting prepared to shoot, as witnessed by the number of weapons found later,” it was “impossible” that they planned an ambush of security forces.95 However the shooting began, the first vestiges of nightfall were punctuated by stray bullets “catching the edges of the walls and sending up sparks.”96 It was not reported that soldiers fired indiscriminately into the activists below in the plaza, but in the chaos and confusion of the scene, these Mexican soldiers certainly followed the Mexican Defense Minister’s orders to “move against student disturbances without waiting for instructions.”97 As darkness settled, gruesome images of students “slumped across the ground….blood running from their temples” littered the square.98

89 Poniatowska, 166.
90 Rodda, “Trapped at Gunpoint.”
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
93 Poniatowska, 167.
94 Rodda, “Trapped at Gunpoint.”
96 Rodda, “Trapped at Gunpoint.”
97 National Security Archive, “Army Participation in Student Situation.”
98 Rodda, “Trapped at Gunpoint.”
In the morning light, the ancient buildings of Tlatelolco still stood watching over the scene of another Mexican massacre; a massacre that brutally suppressed of an alternate view of the Mexican national just 10 days before the Opening Ceremony of the Mexico City Olympics.

After the violence of the Tlatelolco Massacre, the Mexican government and organizing committee worked especially hard to deliver a modern image of Mexico and to live up to the Olympic slogan “Everything is Possible with Peace.”\(^9\)\(^9\) The official story promoted by the Mexican government was that “the entire conflict was caused by the Communists and other professional agitators who had initiated yet another campaign to tarnish Mexico’s image,” but there was no mention the activists’ critiques of the authoritarian government or the exorbitant, seemingly unnecessary spending on these Olympics.\(^10\)\(^0\) Ex-President General Lazaro Cardenas gave a statement to the international press similarly claiming that these protests were stirred up by “anti-national and foreign elements who were taking advantage of internal conflict,” but again, the activists’ demands were not mentioned and the government did not take any responsibility for the attack.\(^10\)\(^1\) The government thus crushed student concerns highlighted in peaceful protests and took no responsibility for the violence of the Massacre.

A few first-hand accounts of the violence appeared in the international press, but most international coverage of the Mexico City Games accepted the government’s interpretation and

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*Giniger, “Olympics 1968: Mexico City is Ready.”*  
Castañeda, 6.  
*Nati*  
ional Security Archive, “Army Participation in Student Situation.”
concluded that “despite the tension, the Olympics still seem to have the wholehearted support of most people.”  These complimentary articles promoted the view that the student movement did not damage the reputation of the Mexico City Olympics and showed the Mexican government’s influence on the international media. In fact, the Mexican government considered these Games “a total propaganda victory…creating an illusion of a peaceful and tolerant nation.” Similarly, Brundage’s decision to continue the Games after the Massacre allowed the government to continue promoting its idealized view that Mexicans were unified, despite this conflict. Brundage said that after he had “consulted with Mexican authorities,” nothing would “interfere with the carrying of the Olympic flame to the Olympic cauldron on October 12th.” Because Brundage served as the President of the International Olympic Committee, his decision appeared to endorse this peaceful, modern view of the nation promoted by Mexican elites. This “victory” was also verified by many international newspaper reports written after the Games that briefly mentioned the student protests, if at all.

Accounts from various newspapers including the New York Times, the Los Angeles Times, the Chicago Tribune, and The Guardian, all conformed to the Mexican government’s account of a peaceful Olympics that reflected and strengthened Mexican nationalism and modernity. For example, Richard Joseph wrote in a December 1968 article for the Los Angeles Times that “the ’68 games left Mexico a heightened sense of national pride and accomplishment” as well as more concrete legacies like new infrastructure and technology. Joseph also noted that “the Cultural Olympics…were the most successful ever staged” and further strengthened the Mexican nation. Joseph did not mention the student movement or conflict at all; instead, he focused on the national themes of the closing ceremony, Cultural Olympics, and the technological advances that symbolized modern Mexico.

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102 Giniger, “Olympics 1968: Mexico City is Ready.”
103 Castañeda, 24
105 Joseph, “Mexico Basks in Olympic Afterglow.”
106 Ibid.
Another article from the *Chicago Tribune* reinforced how successful the Mexican government was in creating a strong perception of new, modern, and peaceful nationalism to the world. The paper’s account of the Games denoted “the apparent student unrest” and instead focused on the strong, modern nation portrayed during the Games.\(^{107}\) This *Chicago Tribune* article noted that whether the government had quashed protests or they had stopped on their own, no protests were seen during the Games and “the Mexican people seemed to take great pride in having the Olympics come to Mexico and Latin America for the first time.”\(^{108}\) While this article touched on the student movement and speculated that the Mexican government may have played a role in stopping the protests and mentioned “jailing protestors,” the focus of the article was on the pride of the Mexican people hosting the Games.\(^{109}\) Reporters were apparently approached by Mexican locals who wanted to know “how we rated their country’s handling of this great sporting fiesta. ‘Magnifico!’ we would cry, not having the heart to tell them that bus service bordered on the chaotic and stomach disorders were destroying our will to live.”\(^{110}\) Even when reporters mentioned such problems, the student protests were not listed as a disruption or challenge. Furthermore, even while describing these transportation and sickness problems, the reporters implied that Mexican nationalism had blossomed during the Olympics, as portrayed by the excitement of Mexican locals to hear how much international press members also loved their country.

When one international journalist, *Guardian* reporter John Rodda, who was held at gunpoint during the Massacre, wrote openly critical articles, the international community denounced him as insane and traumatized. Even other *Guardian* reporters referred to his account of the events as “bordering on hallucinatory.”\(^ {111}\) Rodda wrote two articles for the *Guardian* on the Tlatelolco Massacre:


\(^{108}\) Ibid.

\(^{109}\) “Letter from Mexico.”

\(^{110}\) Ibid.

one, “Trapped at gunpoint in middle of fighting,” recounted the events of the Massacre, and another, “Olympic Games to go ahead in spite of Mexico rioting” criticized the International Olympic Committee for its decision that the Games “should proceed as scheduled.” Even though Rodda revealed that at least 267 activists were killed instead of 27, as originally stated by the Mexican army, Rodda’s testimony did not gain widespread recognition or incite condemnation against the Mexican government. In fact, newspaper coverage was “scant and generally biased towards the official version of events” in Mexico and internationally.

Even within Mexico, television coverage of the Massacre was scarce and producers instead defaulted to the government’s idealized view of the Mexican nation. News on the Olympics and the Massacre provided by Telesistema Mexicano, the largest Mexican commercial television network, showed “that media executives and government officials pursued a similar goal—to construct positive images of a modern country for viewers at home and abroad,” often at the expense of journalistic accuracy and honesty. For example, eleven out of fifteen evening news segments on Channel 2, one part of Telesistema Mexicano, focused on international issues while ignoring national news besides that of local Olympians. Similarly, only one of the three news programs on Channel 4, a division of Telesistema Mexicano, that broadcasted on the evening of October 2, 1968, mentioned the Tlatelolco Massacre in an attempt to “downplay the student movements” for domestic and international audiences. In this newscast, Channel 4 broadcasters also stuck to the Mexican government’s version of events and did not include any activist input. Anchor Jorge Saldaña said that the “soldiers returned fire” according to Mexican Secretary of Defense General Marcelino García Barragán and followed the

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113 Nelsson.
114 Brewster and Brewster, 157.
117 Ibid, 4.
government’s first story that there were only 7 deaths.\textsuperscript{118} The next morning on Channel 2, lead anchor Zabludovsky continued to report official government stories. For example, the report mentioned that “an organized group of foreigners, professional agitators [caused] the assaults, crimes, and disturbances” and quoted defense minister Barragán saying “we are a free country and we want freedom to continue to prevail.” Zabludovsky later recalled receiving “constant phone calls from the Interior Ministry, the agency that enforces the Mexican President’s political control, asking him to play down unfavorable developments and highlight Government gains” after the Massacre.\textsuperscript{119} These and similar TV reports through Telesistema Mexicano also showed activists in a negative light by using words like “terrorist” and “gang members” to describe activists and to make them seem like threats to the nation.\textsuperscript{120}

While these government-led efforts to cover up the Massacre were reinforced by the international press for several years after the Olympics, classified documents released by the American Department of Defense in 1998 such as the Intelligence Information Report “Army Participation in the Student Situation, Mexico City,” confirmed the intentional involvement of Mexican government forces.\textsuperscript{121} This document, originally written on October, 18, 1968, noted that the “Mexican Defense Minister instructed military zone commanders throughout the country to move against student disturbances without waiting for instructions.”\textsuperscript{122} The perpetrators of the Tlatelolco Massacre were primarily the Paratroop Battalion and the 44\textsuperscript{th} Infantry Battalion of the Mexican army following these orders.\textsuperscript{123} While stories differ on which side fired first, the number of injured and dead tell an interesting story: 13 Mexican soldiers versus at least 200 activists.\textsuperscript{124} Furthermore, Mexican documents

\textsuperscript{118} de Bustamante, 15.  
\textsuperscript{120} González de Bustamante.  
\textsuperscript{121} National Security Archive, “Army Participation in Student Situation.”  
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.
later released from Mexican Secretary of Defense confirmed that “government officials dressed in plain clothes fired the shots from the top of the Ministry of Exterior Relations building, which overlooks the Plaza de las Tres Culturas,” proving that the government played an active role in the Massacre.\textsuperscript{125} However, because international reports such as these had not surfaced, there was no pressure to challenge the Mexican government’s idealized view of the nation or denial of blame for the violence.

As shown through accounts from major international papers, this lack of foreign concern about the Tlatelolco Massacre in 1968 enabled the idealized narrative of Mexican elites to succeed. Because international journalists and even the International Olympic Committee were limited in their criticisms of the violent actions promoted by the Mexican government, these foreign opinions effectively sanctioned the elites’ view of the Mexican nation that they had built through propaganda beginning before the Games.

\textbf{IV. Remembering the Tlatelolco Massacre and Mexican Nationalism}

Another important foundation of nationalism was how the nation is remembered. Just as Jose Maria Morelos, a Mexican priest and revolutionary during the early nineteenth century, established an egalitarian constitution to “inaugurate a new era” and therefore change how Mexico’s revolution would be remembered, so too did the Tlatelolco Massacre play a part in how the Mexican nation would be remembered.\textsuperscript{126} The remembrance of this Massacre represented conflicting views of the Mexican nation. Those who wanted to remember the student activists and the reforms they fought for challenged those elites who wanted to remember the Olympic Games as a positive event that expressed the modern image of the Mexican nation.

\textsuperscript{125} Julio Scherer García and Carlos Monsiváis, \textit{Tlatelolco: Documentos del general Marcelino García Barragán. Los hechos y la historia} (Mexico: Nuevo Siglo, 1999), 179.
\textsuperscript{126} Anderson, 193.
While official Mexican reports were not released for many years and the Mexican government focused more on quieting the remembrance of this Massacre, it was a “watershed moment” in Mexican history leading to democratic political reforms in the 1970s. However, many of these alternative remembrances of student activists and their view of the Mexican nation were not widely spread within Mexico or the international community until long after the Games. Even within Mexico, “very few people beyond the precincts of Tlatelolco were fully aware of what had occurred…and simply refused to believe that repression on this scale could have taken place.” Furthermore, “commemorative marches were forbidden until 1978 and, even then, the march marking the tenth anniversary of the Massacre was held under strict security,” and it took 25 years for the memorial to those killed in Tlatelolco to be built. Even official Mexican history books, like José Fuentes Mares’ *Biografía de una nación. De Cortés a López Portillo*, largely ignored the Tlatelolco Massacre. Besides preventing these remembrances, the Mexican government also gained such complete control over the press that writer Octavio Paz eventually stepped down as ambassador to India in condemnation of Mexican censorship; he said, “dialogue has almost completely disappeared from our public life.” In the short term, the official narrative of Mexican nationalism was dominant because there was no international pressure on the Mexican government to recognize the critiques presented in the student activists’ nationalism.

V. Conclusion

As seen through propaganda before, during, and after the Tlatelolco Massacre and Olympic Games hosted in Mexico City 1968, international perceptions effectively sanctioned the elites’ idealized view of a modern, united Mexican nation. Before the Games, the Mexican government and

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128 Brewster and Brewster, 157.
129 Ibid.
131 Rojo, 3.
elites who dominated the Mexican Olympic Committee used newspaper accounts, official logos, the Cultural Olympics, and Olympic architecture to draw positive international attention to an idealized Mexico instead of the demands being made by activist students. In a rush to quell the activists, the government then sanctioned the violence of the Tlatelolco Massacre and covered up the magnitude of the massacre in the international press and in remembrances of the Massacre at home. Instead, the government continued to focus on using the Olympic Games as a promotional tool to solidify their idealized view of the Mexican nation. Although the Games acted as a catalyst for differing strains of Mexican nationalism to eventually emerge, official Mexican propaganda and complimentary international press coverage of these Olympics effectively sanctioned the elites’ view of the Mexican “imagined political community.” The Olympic Games had served Mexican nationalism far more than it served Mexican or international athletes.
“The Happy Games”:
How International Criticism of the Black September Attack and Germany’s Nazi History
Fractured Peaceful Images of the West German Nation

I. Introduction

Like the Mexico City Games of 1968, the Munich Olympics of 1972 highlighted differing views of the West German host nation. The mass media had narrated developments in German nationalism throughout the twentieth century, from Hitler’s Nazism of the 1930s, to barely visible post-World War II nationalism, to the re-invention of West and East German nationalism by the 1970s. The 1936 Berlin Olympics illustrated the height of Hitler’s Nazi emphasis on militarism, grandeur, political dominance, and Aryan perfection.132 Germany’s exclusion from the 1948 London Games was part of the international sanctions placed on Germany after the country’s defeat in World War II and was representative of the weak, shameful sense of German nationalism at that time.133 The next Olympics hosted by West Germany, the 1972 Munich Olympics, were to be what West German Chancellor Willy Brandt called the “Happy Games” meant to renew international relations and to counter the Nazi propaganda of 1936 Olympics.134 However, the “Happy Games” were disrupted by the tragedy of the Black September Massacre, and the international media soon recognized the Games more for this terrorist attack and the revived memories of anti-Semitic tendencies in the 1936 Berlin Olympics than for West Germany’s renewed place in the world. While the peaceful, unified view of the West German nation that Olympic Organizers promoted had not faced significant resistance within the nation before the Munich Games, international media attacks inspired internal assaults on this idealized, “fully recovered” West German nationalism after the Black September attacks.

132 Anton Rippon, Hitler’s Olympics: The Story of the 1936 Nazi Games (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword, 2006), 94.
West Germany resembled Mexico before it as it tried to portray an image of a progressive, peaceful, and united nation while hosting these Games. Although East and West Germany would not be reunited until 1990, West Germany hoped to use these Games to “increase its own status” at the expense of East Germany’s status – thus establishing West Germany as the new and internationally approved “Germany” on the world stage.\textsuperscript{135} West Germany’s primary goal was to build a new, unified nationalism within West Germany, not including East Germany. But, West Germany still included East Germany in competition despite its economic and thus diplomatic superiority because East German athletes were “growing in athletic accomplishments;” thus, the absence of the East German athletes would have “devalued the currency” of these international Games.\textsuperscript{136} It also would have appeared as if democratic West Germany was defying the universality and democracy in Coubertin’s ideal vision of Olympic sport competition by excluding a rival nation.\textsuperscript{137} Therefore, despite East Germany’s many attempts to flood the international press with negative reactions to the very idea of the Games being hosed in West Germany, West Germany concentrated on building an internal sense of nationalism and unity while largely ignoring East Germany during the Games.\textsuperscript{138}

In the eyes of the West German organizers, after the violence of World War II, “it was necessary to rebuild not only the German landscape but also German national identity” and to overcome the lingering shame many West Germans held from their Nazi history.\textsuperscript{139} There was fervent Olympic zeal in West Germany in 1972 as its citizens were “eager to erase the enduring image of Hitler’s propaganda-laden 1936 Games” and instead show the world “a rehabilitated and positive West Germany.”\textsuperscript{140} The goal of this “rehabilitated” West Germany was to be achieved by

\begin{footnotes}
\item[135] Kay Schiller and Christopher Young, The 1972 Munich Olympics and the Making of Modern Germany (Berkeley: U of California, 2010), 175.
\item[136] Ibid., 169.
\item[137] Ibid.
\item[138] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
constructing a new narrative about the nation. To achieve this goal of a new and more positive nationalism, West Germans used several forms of media to pull together the nation internally and to renew its image internationally in preparation for the Olympics.

But competing views of the West German nation emerged from the skepticism of the international media starting before the Games, and intensifying after the Black September terror attacks, promoted internal conflict after the Olympics. While Mexico had been able to contain domestic protests by convincing the international media to turn a blind eye, the international press criticized the West German nation and helped to spark protests within the nation. In particular, West Germany’s Olympic crisis, the Black September terrorist attack, represented a conflict of global proportions between Palestinian terrorists and Israeli victims that drew more international press attention than the domestic Mexican Tlatelolco Massacre, especially because of the anti-Semitic images revived by the killing of younger Jewish people on German soil. This televised, global scandal led many to unfavorably link the West German nation to Hitler’s Nazism, despite the idealized new view of the nation presented during the Games. West German Olympic organizers intended the 1972 Munich Olympics to be a symbol of how West Germany had overcome Nazism and was a more peaceful and progressive nation. However, international media coverage of these Games and the Black September attack struck down this proposed view of the West German nation and inspired internal assaults from within that broke apart this unified vision of West German nationalism.

II. Setting Expectations for the 1972 Munich Olympics

As acknowledged in West German government statements, newspaper accounts, and Olympic design choices, the West German Organizing Committee hoped to convince international journalists and the West German people of a new view of the peaceful, positive West German nation. This idealized West German nationalism was promoted over foreign fears that the nation was still a violent
reflection of Hitler’s Nazism, racism, and anti-Semitism.

Even the nickname for these Olympics, the “Happy Games,” was representative of idealized views of the West German nation. According to Cambridge Professor of German Studies, Christopher Young, “the official motto of the Munich Olympics was the Happy Games,” which was meant to pull together the West German people in celebration of the progress of the nation.\textsuperscript{141} West German Chancellor Willy Brandt also referred to these Olympics as the “Happy Games” in several TV addresses to the West German and international communities.\textsuperscript{142} Although West Germany continued to confront World War II horrors in the ongoing Auschwitz Trials, “West Germans viewed their present and future with optimism” and embraced the Olympics as a “Happy Games” to further unify the nation.\textsuperscript{143} Will Daume, president of West German Olympic Committee 1972, reiterated this belief when he said, “the selection of Munich for this year’s games means the world’s gift of renewed trust in [West] Germany,” and gave West Germany the opportunity to oust its Nazi associations that tarnished “Germany’s good name.”\textsuperscript{144} Chancellor Brandt and other I.O.C. officials also aimed to portray West Germany as “a modern and prosperous country, secure in its democratic institutions and divorced forever from its militaristic past” to international journalists through media such as newspaper accounts and architecture.\textsuperscript{145}

The Munich Olympics began with positive international media coverage. Munich organizers were aware of the pressure to please the international media and attempted to curry media favor at any expense so that this outside affirmation might help renew views of the West German nation as positive and peaceful. “Aiming to please at all costs, Munich arguably treated the journalists better than the

\textsuperscript{141} Muhlenkamp, “The ‘Happy Games’ That Weren’t.”
\textsuperscript{143} Muhlenkamp, “The ‘Happy Games’ That Weren’t.”
\textsuperscript{145} Goshko, “Munich’s Olympics.”
“athletes” and even built a luxurious new studio for radio and TV broadcasts. Unlike the Nazis who shunned the press in 1936, the organizers of the 1972 Games focused on transparency and accommodation for reporters to whom they were trying to sell the “New Germany.” Clearly, these tactics worked, as many articles leading up to the Games praised West German preparations. For example, the Atlanta Daily World proclaimed almost a full year before the Olympics began that “in the sports world, excitement has already started to build in anticipation of the Olympics scheduled for… Munich, Germany.” The Baltimore Sun also noted several positive differences from preparations from Hitler’s 1936 Olympics, including the Nobel Peace Prize of current West German Chancellor Willy Brandt that was “a contrast in itself.” This article entitled, “A Different Germany Awaits Olympic Games,” quoted Brandt saying, “the Munich Games ‘will show the world a different Germany,’” primarily through a physical contrast of landscape and “radical architectural design.” International journalists quickly noted that the landscape of these 1972 Games was much different than the militaristic sentiments of the 1936 Games, and instead, as reported by Goshko to the Washington Post, the spirit of Munich felt “earthy, easygoing and tolerant” in the months leading up to the Games. The praise of athletes dishonored in Hitler’s Olympics, such as Jesse Owens, also helped overcome the lingering images of racism and anti-Semitism from the 1936 Games to successfully create an idealized image of West Germany.

Furthermore, as in their earlier stories about Mexico, international journalists covered cultural attractions meant to show off unified, uplifting German culture at the heart of the renewed West German nation. Goshko referred to these attractions as the “Cultural Olympiad,” a term previously

146 Schiller and Young, The 1972 Munich Olympics, 53.
149 Ibid.
150 Goshko, “Munich’s Olympics.”
151 “A Different Germany Awaits Olympic Games.”
used to describe the Mexican arts exhibit before the 1968 Mexico City Olympics that helped positively shape international opinions of the Mexican nation.152 These “cultural side attractions” displayed “…Munich’s substantial and world-famous cultural resources [and] the best that West Germany’s other cities and regions can offer, and even a wholesome importation of famous artistic groups from other countries participating in the Olympics.”153 Through this two-fold purpose of highlighting positive German culture and integrating world cultures with Germany’s culture, West German Olympic Organizers succeeded in promoting idealized views of the renewed West German nation to international journalists.

Another tool used to differentiate the 1972 Games design from the 1936 Games included the color scheme. Whereas the red and black of Nazi banners represented Hitler’s Germany in the 1936 Games, light blue was chosen as the main color for the 1972 Munich Games because “blue is the color of peace, it is the color of youth, it is the color of the Bavarian Lakes and the silhouettes of the Alps.”154 This strategic color choice evoked serene scenes from the West German countryside and the new, promising generation of West Germans not tarnished by World War II. Similarly, instead of the red swastikas used in the 1936 Games, the West German Olympic designer Otl Aicher represented a “democratic, cosmopolitan and amicable Germany…on a visual level by creating a blaze of colors and pastels of the rainbow,” and the police were also dressed in this colorful clothing.155 These new colors

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152 Goshko, “Munich’s Olympics.”
153 Ibid.
155 Modrey, 694.
countered the harsh, militaristic nature of 1936, evidencing the attempted goal of revising West German nationalism to counter Nazi perceptions.


West German Olympic organizers also used architecture to portray their newly unified, pacifist nation. New buildings were designed in this calming, uplifting color palate. These constructions were also notably modern: Munich designers built “buildings, playing fields and lagoons so futuristic in architectural conception that it seems to have been lifted out of an old Buck Rogers comic strip.”

In Munich, modernism was “identified as the architecture of democracy” because modernism was the opposite of Hitler’s classical inspirations. Similarly, the Munich Olympic stadium was “a symbol for the West German democratic state after the Second World War” showing modern progress from Nazism to democracy. A new view of the nation was expressed in this progressive architecture because the buildings “offered people the emotionally important sense of safety belonging to supportive social groups,” instead of living alone in fear of and ashamed by Nazism.

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156 Goshko, “Munich’s Olympics.”
157 Tomlinson and Young, 125.
158 Ibid., 124.
159 Kramer, 2.
Munich architect Günter Behnisch constructed the new Olympic complex “to set a counterpart to 1936…the construction of the site was aimed at and succeeded in posing an antipode to the axis architecture of the National Socialist regime, and especially of the Olympic Stadium in Berlin.”160

Instead, Behnisch created “large, sweeping canopies of acrylic glass” that signaled transparency instead of hiding behind thick propaganda.161

New structures for the Olympics were also designed to help ordinary West German citizens by providing more housing and meeting other practical needs. By meeting these needs, structural benefits were intended to increase West Germans’ confidence and pride in their nation. For example, “one of the peripheral benefits of playing host at the Olympics was to be the much-needed increase in housing which the athletes’ village would provide.”162 The West German organizers also worked hard to transform physical sites representative of Nazism, like the Oberwiesenfeld site.163 This field had been the site of Chamberlain Munich Pact and then dumping ground for WWII rubble before being

160 Modrey, 694.
161 Ibid.
163 Goshko, “Munich’s Olympics.”
transformed into a new venue for Olympic buildings.\textsuperscript{164} The city of Munich itself also aided in affirming a new West German nationalism because Munich was known as “the merry metropolis” and “a world city, but with a heart,” which represented the opposite of the classical architecture, colder climate, and harsh Nazi memories held in Berlin.\textsuperscript{165}

Finally, the most drastic structural change came with the 13,000 German soldiers who took on a new purpose as “guards, ushers, first-aid helpers and even as ‘extras’ to boost attendance” at the less popular athletic events.\textsuperscript{166} Instead of monitoring nearly every exit as soldiers had in the Berlin Games, this “was the first time athletes entering an Olympic stadium had not been accompanied by a military band.”\textsuperscript{167} The West German journalist Sebastian Haffner wrote in the \textit{Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung} newspaper on August 28, 1972, that “‘Marching steps took a break -- a remarkable event, especially in Germany.’”\textsuperscript{168} The relief evident in Haffner’s article showed renewed faith in West Germany by West Germans who saw that the military ages of West Germany, at least, were finally gone. The “projected tolerance, welcoming architecture, and small security measures” used in the 1972 Olympics were in stark contrast to the militaristic measures of the 1936 Berlin Olympics and in turn strengthened the new view of the West German nation through positive media representations.\textsuperscript{169}

\textbf{III. The Black September Terrorist Attack: Differing Views of the German Nation Come to a Head}

However, all of these measures used to promote an idealized view of the West German nation at home and abroad, and all of the positive reviews from international journalists leading up to the Games, were undermined by the Black September terrorist attack. This attack became so synonymous

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\textsuperscript{164} Goshko, “Munich’s Olympics.”
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{167} Tomlinson and Young, 128.
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{169} Elzey, 19.
\end{flushright}
with the Munich Games it became known around the world as the “Munich Murders.” On Tuesday, September 6, 1972, the radical Palestinian terrorist group known as “Black September” first “staged an attack on the Olympic Village and later tried to flee Germany with hostages” from the Israeli men’s wrestling and weightlifting teams. The morning attack occurred around 4:30AM after the attackers had scaled the 6 foot wall surrounding the Olympic village, and two of the Israeli team members were killed and nine others taken hostage in the first attack. Then, “18 hours later during a shoot-out with police at a nearby military airfield, at least seven of the nine Israeli hostages were killed.” This botched rescue of the Israelis and capture of the terrorists resulted from several poor decisions on the part of West German officials, who first offered the attackers ransoms to free these hostages, then offered to replace the Israeli hostages with West German hostages, and eventually appeared to capitulate to the terrorists’ demands for a plane to fly to Cairo. Finally, the West German officials tried to ambush the terrorists and free the hostages once they had arrived to take the plane awaiting them at the airfield. The terrorists were fired on when they stepped off the helicopter transporting them to the airfield, and because they could not all be taken down at once, the terrorists opened fire on the remaining hostages and one West German policeman.

“Associated Press photographer Kurt Strumpf froze this haunting image, the faceless look of terror. As the Palestinians attempted to flee, German snipers tried to take them out, and the Palestinians killed the hostages and a policeman.”


“Perched on a terrace directly above the Israeli quarters, a German policeman checks his submachine gun before advancing further.”

http://www.100photos.time.com/photos/kurt-strumpf-munich-massacre

172 Ibid.
173 Ibid.
174 Ibid.
175 Ibid.
176 Ibid.
This attack “threw the Olympic Games into shambles,” especially because the event was televised and brought back strong memories of the horrors of Nazi Germany when so many Jews were killed. While the Munich Games were meant to overcome the racist and anti-Semitic Nazi sentiments associated with the Berlin Games, these attacks revived memories of these shameful sentiments because Jews were again killed on German soil, even though they were not killed by Germans. TV anchors around the world also covered the events live, such as ABC’s Jim McKay, “a sportscaster who assumed the duties of a news anchor” as the 21 hour spectacle played out on live TV. Furthermore, the West Germans were criticized for the low security measures they had implemented to avoid comparison to Berlin and for their several botched attempts to negotiate with these terrorists. In Chancellor Brandt’s TV address, he noted that “the joyous Games have come to an end… in these hours and these days we will have to prove ourselves anew,” fittingly recognizing that West Germany’s attempt to project an idealized view of the nation distinct from Nazi Germany had failed.

IV. International Reactions to the Black September Terrorist Attack

Even though the plans for the 1972 Olympics were motivated by positive politics, the international community remained skeptical of West German intentions, and the Black September terrorist attack opened the door to international critiques of West Germany that greatly harmed the goal of redefining views of the West German nation abroad. Munich had attempted to show national peace and transparency through architectural designs, color schemes, and other preparatory measures, but “while the excellence of West German architecture could be relied upon to make an impact abroad, the essence of the country’s image remained in some doubt.” This description of international unease

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177 Oishi, “9 Members of Israel’s Olympic Team Killed.”
179 Oishi, “9 Members of Israel’s Olympic Team Killed.”
180 Ibid.
181 Schiller and Young, 90.
demonstrated that new views of the West German nation had not been fully accepted by the international media before the Games. On top of this initial skepticism, the Black September terrorist attack exposed the 1972 Games to unfavorable comparisons with both the Berlin Games and other recent Olympics.

The most harmful comments compared this new West Germany to the very Nazi Germany the 1972 Games had sought to overcome. Before the terrorist attack, a few were already skeptical of the idealized view Munich showed the international press, and they judged Germany by tiny details like “the behavior of the German audiences at the competitions…they whistled disapproval and rang cowbells at every decision affecting a German gymnast.”182 This reminded spectators and media of the fervent emotions of Hitler’s Nazism in the 1936 Games. The Black September attack merely validated these opinions for many Europeans. The private diary of Richard Mandell records his reaction to the Black September attack as the following: “The Jews again! And here too!”183 Mandell’s reaction mirrors what many international reactions must have been. These reactions showed the assumption that West German nationalism was still based on a hostility to Jews and the core concepts of evil Nazism.

From the moment international media outlets took over coverage of the Black September attack, they also shaped foreign perceptions of West Germany’s reputation. The international media could also attack West Germany easily because “Black September turned terrorism into a global televsional spectacle for the first time.”184 In particular, this televised account was so powerful because this “imagined reality was overwhelmingly visual and aural,” and the recordings of these terrorists evoked strong sentiments around the world.185 Mass media then synthesized this attack with Nazi German history “by drawing on the most potent cultural values, beliefs, myths, history and sentiments” common to Black September and Nazi Germany: anti-Semitism.186 While West Germany did not

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182 Mandell, 122.
183 Ibid., 127.
184 Tomlinson and Young, 114.
185 Anderson, 23.
provoke this terrorism or intend to hurt Jews, parallels were drawn to Nazi Germany. These unsavory
media definitions of West Germany appeared all over the world and were reinforced each day through
TV coverage. Sociological research has proved “the significance of sports media [in developing]
nationalistic fervor and national stereotyping,” so this international media coverage challenged West
German nationalistic fervor instead of increasing national unity.\footnote{187} As coverage of the Black September
attacks displaced coverage of the Olympics themselves, “the repetitive association of the nation with
some event” formed a more distinct impression than any of the positive reforms West Germany had
made.\footnote{188} Similarly, these 1972 Olympic Games were intended to be a “vehicle for calling for unity
within a nation,” but the terrorist attack inhibited this goal by creating a negative media impression that
undermined the positive images of West German nationalism.\footnote{189}

In the wake of the attack, international disapproval intensified with an international outcry over
West German organizers “noting the names of these athletes [the deceased Israelis] with the remark
‘not present’” instead of properly honoring them as deceased in future Olympic competitions they were
scheduled to take part in.\footnote{190} Even though West Germany apologized for this as a technical mistake, the
international community had begun to doubt the proposed new views of the

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.4\textwidth]{time_munich.png}
\caption{One example of Time, an international magazine, portraying the Black September attack in a negative light. Through the Title “Murder in Munich,” Germany is directly tied to the terrorist attack even though Germany did not provoke it and Palestinian terrorists carried it out. \url{http://www.yourememberthat.com/media/7628/1972_Munich_Olympic_Massacre/#.Vl0kQ4Q-Bo4}}
\end{figure}

West German nation. The continued disrespect for the slain Jews intensified this doubt. Allen
Guttmann, the biographer of Avery Brundage, suggested Brundage’s decision to carry on the
1972 Olympics after a one-day memorial for the slain Israelis was received with mixed

\begin{footnotes}
187 Houlihan, 193.
188 Rivenburgh and Larson, 152.
189 Houlihan, 193.
190 Mandell, 144.
\end{footnotes}
opinions. A New York Times account couched this decision in more negative terms: “the bodies of the eleven Israeli athletes and coaches killed by Arab terrorists were still unburied when the Games resumed.” Accounts like these drew parallels to the horrors of the Holocaust and earlier improper burials for Jews. Brundage claimed to make this decision to carry on the Games to preserve the new, positive images of the West German nation, but it may have done more harm than good because of the international criticism that accompanied it. As Avery Brundage proclaimed, “I am sure the public will agree that we cannot allow a handful of terrorists to destroy this nucleus of international cooperation and good will” and particularly, West Germany’s new national values. Unfortunately, international criticism continued to undermine confidence in West Germany at home and abroad.

Distrust of the idealized West German nation was also expressed when other nations began to pull their athletes out of the Games: “the Associated Press [America] reported from Jerusalem Wednesday that Israel had asked the United States to pull out of the Olympics following the Arab attack.” Israel withdrew first, then “at least four Dutch and more than a dozen Norwegian athletes had decided not to participate further.” These withdrawals symbolized a lack of faith in West Germany that then broke down national confidence.

V. German Nationalism Shifts at Home

The Black September terrorist attack hindered the development of a new West German nationalism at home because it caused West German citizens to once again lose faith in their country. West German citizens were also drawn back to parallels with Nazi Germany, blocking the development of a new, revised nationalism. As University of Chicago Magazine writer and blogger Katherine Muhlenkamp noted, “these intended themes of happiness and West German rehabilitation

194 Ibid.
196 Ibid.
were shattered by the shocking murders of 11 Israeli Olympic delegation members by eight terrorists from the Palestinian group Black September” because they renewed images of racism and anti-Semitism synonymous with Hitler’s Nazism that these 1972 Olympics tried to overcome. West German President Gustav Heinemann’s reluctant call for the 1972 Games to continue after a memorial for the slain Israelis, given in “a vastly different vein” than his optimistic opening to these Games, further exemplified doubts inherent in West German nationalism following the terrorist attacks. West German nationalism could not be fully rebuilt because of the terrorist attack that reminded many of Nazi Germany and once again tarnished West German pride.

Many different forms of protest from articles to hate letters proclaimed distrust of West Germany and harmed West Germany’s national unity. These hate letters include those such as that to Daume from a Bonn professor: “The barbaric decision of the IOC to continue the Munich Games fills me with shame…as a personal protest, I will never again enter any of the various arenas in Munich.” This German professor was willing to deny allegiance to his country because of the official reactions to the Black September attacks. In many ways, this sense of shame and following distrust of the West German nation mirrored the shame felt by Germans who lived through Hitler’s Nazi regime. German historian and West German newspaper Spiegel writer, Michael Sontheimer, wrote that “still, almost every single German family harbors a complicated personal war history, some more bitter than others…and some more shameful than others” even in 2005. Sontheimer’s Austrian grandfather even committed suicide in 1945 “from shame” after making many Nazi uniforms, even though he never wore one. While the unified, peaceful West German nation presented at the 1972 Olympics was meant to overcome this sense of shame over Hitler’s Nazism, the Black September terrorist attack and

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197 Muhlenkamp, "The ‘Happy Games’ That Weren't.
198 Ellis, “Games Must Go On,' Says Brundage.”
199 Mandell, 145.
201 Ibid.
the West German Olympic Committee’s response to this tragedy instead helped to revive it.

Furthermore, the West German national media could not adequately reassure the West German population. According to the journal of Richard Mandell, “a hustling producer for the Bavarian state television network has improvised a two-hour program for national distribution to give all the West Germans a basis for understanding what has happened.”202 This account of West German broadcasting illustrated the West German response to the terrorist tragedy as well as an attempt to keep West German citizens informed and upbeat. But many West Germans instead saw similarities with the propaganda of the Nazi 1936 Games, again revoking the progress made in revising and strengthening West German nationalism. West German newspapers like the Süddeutsche Zeitung noted: “There is scarcely a city population in the world which is less imperialist, less aggressive, more peace-loving, more simply humanitarian than that of the Bavarian capital…and yet the reputation is there: city of disorder, fountainhead of political lawlessness,” proving West Germans could never escape their past.203 This looming history of World War II atrocities and shame overshadowed any of the positive new developments in West Germany. In the words of a West German woman after the 1972 attack, “all the old clichés are being brought out again. The foreign press never stops attacking us.”204 These two statements illustrate how the 1972 Games could not overcome the reputation of Nazism to create a new West German nationalism that people really felt secure in. Instead, these Games revived, and strengthened the memories of, the shame of Nazi tendencies of racism and anti-Semitism.

From the standpoint of West German citizens, these Games revealed the “quivering insecurity” that was still preventing a true reform of nationalism.205 A British diplomat asked “Why can’t they just accept it as bad luck?”206 “Bad luck” could not explain the West German “expressions of despair in our

202 Mandell, 132.
203 Adam, 344.
204 Ibid.
205 Adam, 349.
206 Ibid.
planning imaginations” because of the assumption that “the Germans cannot kill another Jew.”²⁰⁷ Many West Germans were so distraught and full of renewed shame that they pressed charges of manslaughter against Minister of the Interior and German Police.²⁰⁸ This “hostility” towards the West German government and its officials shows the evident drop in West German confidence and an increase in shame and distrust of their own government immediately following the terrorist attacks. “Conrad Ahlers, Willy Brandt’s press secretary…told the world: ‘For us Germans it was a tragic situation that all this happened to Jewish people’” because it was so reminiscent of the Holocaust and again hindered the development of a new West German identity.²⁰⁹

VI. Conclusion

Large sporting events like the Olympics “were used by the host nations both to celebrate a historical legacy and to aspire to the expression of the modernity” in both Mexico City and Munich.²¹⁰ But while the 1972 Munich Games were meant to show West German modernity, the terrorist attack carried Germany back to its unfortunate history. As explained by Benedict Anderson, “if nation-states are widely conceded to be ‘new’ and ‘historical,’ the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past.”²¹¹ The international media dredging up comparisons to the 1936 “Nazi Games” proved that West Germany could not escape its past even after attempting to reinvent nationalism through architecture and mass media appeals. After the Black September attacks and further international attacks, domestic West German protests further challenged the idealized view of the “new” West German nation presented in these Munich Games. The international and national media scrutiny of the 1972 Munich Games, and particularly the coverage of the Black September terrorist attack, made it difficult for West Germany to heal as a nation and to move away from its violent Nazi past. The power of the international media can also be seen in how new views of a

²⁰⁷ Mandell, 131.
²⁰⁸ Adam, 347.
²⁰⁹ Tomlinson and Young, 118.
²¹⁰ Tomlinson and Young, 6.
²¹¹ Anderson, 11.
peaceful, positive West German nation presented in the 1972 Olympics were stymied by critical international media while similar new views of the Mexican nation were sanctioned by positive international press coverage in the previous Olympics. While both of these Games featured disruptive events that threatened idealized views of these nations, the nature of international media coverage ultimately determined how much impact these tragedies had on the development of national narratives after the Olympics.
“The Best Games”: How the 1996 Atlanta Olympics Symbolized International Questioning of the New South and American Commercialism

I. Introduction

Atlanta is the survivor of Sherman’s March to the Sea, home to the Civil Rights Movement and Gone with the Wind, birthplace of Coca-Cola and CNN, and famous for Southern cooking. And as the capital of the “New South,” Atlanta was eager to highlight its image as a charming yet modern city through the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. These Olympics served as a cultural opportunity to redefine the South because they drew international media attention that sanctioned the remembrance of the American nation, and modern progress of the American South, at home and abroad. These Atlanta Games also resembled the Mexico City Games of 1968 and the Munich Games of 1972 as the city tried to appear progressive and international. Especially after the violent history of the South, including the Civil War, segregation, and lingering racial tensions, it was necessary to show off the development of the New South and the economic success and racial equality of the United States at large. In hopes of convincing the international media of Atlanta’s preparedness, Atlanta Olympic organizers claimed that Atlanta was a “global city, internationally connected and ready to put on the spectacular.” Atlanta had become a global city in part because of its “dynamic economy and demography” and because it supposedly represented the New South through its exemplary “racial equality and entrenched civil rights envisaged by Martin Luther King.” To fully achieve this goal of a new and more positive nationalism, Atlanta organizers used several forms of media to unify the city and state internally and to renew its image internationally on the global stage of the Olympics.

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214 Ibid.
But like the Mexico City Games in 1968 and the Munich Games in 1972, the Atlanta Olympics of 1996 brought forth simmering racial and economic tensions already existent in the New South and America. Even the term the New South represented this conflict: when Henry W. Grady first publicized his vision of the “New South” in 1896, he mixed Southern regional economic empowerment with a “grim determination to maintain white supremacy,” thus continuing the racial discrimination native to the South.215 In the twentieth century, this term was modernized to represent economic progress and racial equality, but Atlanta remained representative of a controversial region of America that many still associated with racism and inequality. The international media soon picked up on these tensions and competing regional and national narratives. The idealized views of the New South and of the American nation that Atlanta Olympics organizers were eager to display were disrupted from the start of the Games with questions rising over the New South’s racial equality and economic success.

From the beginning, Atlanta was not as successful in covering up internal fractures as Mexico City was in covering up the violence of the Tlatelolco Massacre. Conflicts within Georgia developed between urban and rural communities, and between black and white residents, who held different views of Atlanta’s racially charged, Confederate past.216 The pipe bombing terror attack in Atlanta during the Games also undermined Atlanta’s international credibility, although it was not the first foreign complaint against the Atlanta Games and did not draw as much international criticism as the Black September terror attack in the Munich 1972 Olympics. This terrorist attack instead built upon existing concerns of the international press over technological difficulties and excessive commercialism.217 As in Mexico and Germany, the organizers of the Atlanta Olympics struggled to

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215 Link, 156.
Harold Eugene Davis, Henry Grady’s New South: Atlanta, a Brave and Beautiful City (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), 168.
216 Duncan, 97.
sustain the positive national message of modern racial and economic progress that the Games were supposed to convey. \(^{218}\) International media criticism of these Games began with complaints of Southern inequality and American commercialism, continued with the pipe bomb terror attack, and finally centered again on lingering Confederate sentiments and excessive commercialism, which further struck down the organizers’ proposed view of the New South and America.

II. The Mass Media and Nationalism Connection

While the host cities of Munich and Mexico City were largely considered representative of their nations, Atlanta was known as the capital of the New South, not of the American nation. Only ten years before these Games, John Shelton Reed concluded that “the Southern regional society may be thought of as roughly coterminous with a Southern ethnic society” with its own memories, traditions, and focus on the Caucasian race, distinct from American nationality. \(^{219}\) These “memories of a shared historical past” became “an important component in defining ethnic identit[ies]” of white Southerners. \(^{220}\) These Southerners may have created a nearly unified racial ethnicity, but they could not successfully form a sovereign nation through the Confederate secession. \(^{221}\) This failed political nationalism then gave way to a strong sense of cultural nationalism.

After this failure, many other Americans viewed the South as having a “degenerate nationalism” that declined “from a liberal, humanitarian, and peaceful form [of nationalism] to a reactionary, egoistic and violent form” during the Civil War. \(^{222}\) After the war, the South was again bound together “by the bitter strands of … defeat and a slow, painful reconstruction,” which created an identity unique


\(^{220}\) Ibid.


The negative light shed on the South from within and outside America made it even more challenging for a Southern Olympic host city like Atlanta to represent larger American national ideals. Therefore, Atlanta had to build views of the American nation and the Southern region from two sets of cultural roots to dispel critical views from within and outside the nation. Atlanta hoped to portray these two sets of values through the press and particularly by gaining the approval of the international press.\footnote{Anderson, 46.} Through media promotions, Atlanta attempted “to introduce itself to a global audience and to transport national identity” to garner international approval necessary to solidify unified views of the American nation and South from within and abroad.\footnote{Houlihan, 189.} However, the changing South often struggled to take on this idealized view and to create a shared, sanitized history because “its black and white citizens’ experiences and perceptions of history [we]re often at odds.”\footnote{Harrison, “Olympics Spark Debate.”} The international press also took a more skeptical view of the American nation and American South before the 1996 Games began because of this divisive history and racial inequality that appeared to define the South. Therefore, the Atlanta Games gave Southerners a chance to draw international media that could provide external confirmation of their idealized views of the region instead of the American and international media’s skeptical ones. The Atlanta Olympic Committee and government officials began to appeal to the world for support, and the international press started questioning the South’s problematic past, before the Games began.
III. Setting Expectations for the 1996 Atlanta Olympics

The Atlanta Organizing Committee hoped to convince international journalists and the American people of a new view of the modern, positive South and American nation using the same practices of Mexico and Germany like government statements, newspaper accounts, and Olympic programs. This idealized view was promoted over foreign fears that the South was still a violent reflection of racism and a degenerative, failed nation.

According to The Official Report of the Centennial Games written by the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games, these Games were “a dream to be grasped, a thought to be scaled, a moment to be embraced… [to draw] the city together in a bond of desire far greater than anything before.”

These organizers not only wanted to unify Atlanta, but also the nation and the world by promoting a modern, uplifting view of the American South. Similarly, a black community leader, former Atlanta mayor, Ambassador to the United Nations, and co-chairman of the Atlanta Organizing Committee, Andrew Young, was eager for Atlanta to host these Games because he hoped to promote Atlanta’s legacy of civil rights and inclusion, which he thought would complement “the parallel values at the heart of Coubertin’s Olympic Movement – uniting the world in friendship and peace with respect for the full diversity of humanity.”

The Atlanta Organizing Committee featured black and white political and economic leaders of Atlanta, all of whom shared a joint agenda in presenting this idealized vision of the New South. For example, the co-chairmen of the Atlanta Organizing Committee were Young and Billy Payne, a wealthy, white Atlanta real estate attorney. These two seemingly opposite chairs shared the belief that these Olympics could show the world that Atlanta was a progressive, successful

228 Goldblatt, 353.
230 Senn, 248.
city. But as easy as it was to set high hopes for unity and modernity in Atlanta, these organizers also had to find a way to prove these changes to the world through promotional tools like the 1996 Cultural Olympiad and the Opening Ceremony.

The 1996 Cultural Olympiad began to promote these idealized views of the Atlanta Games as a source of international and Southern unity well before the Games began. The director of this Cultural Olympiad, Jeffrey Babcock, had been a founder of the New World Symphony in Miami and planned to combine “funk, flash, grit and showbiz” to promote Atlanta’s multicultural and Southern culture on the world stage.231 Furthermore, he hoped to use this Olympiad to promote the Olympic spirit and to fulfill “Pierre de Coubertin’s vision for the Games 100 years ago” by unifying global spectators through a collection of international art.232 J. Carter Brown, former director of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, also promoted this gathering of 750 performers and works of art in hopes of showing international “interconnectedness” with Southern culture.233 He designed a longstanding exhibit called “Rings: Five Passions in World Art” to focus on five “universal emotions” represented in the mix of art on display: love, anguish, awe, triumph, and joy.234 Through these common emotions, Brown hoped to make the South and its past more understandable and acceptable on the global stage.

In addition to world unity, Maxwell L. Anderson, director of Atlanta’s Carlos Museum, hoped that this exhibit would help international visitors see Atlanta differently than its stereotypes of a deep South city lacking sophisticated culture.235 Organizers hoped this Olympiad could alter perceptions of Atlanta from simply a hub for commercialism and business to a “cultural powerhouse” that could stand up to the strong art presence in other major American and international cities.236

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233 Applebome, “Culture Will Be A Serious Competitor.”
234 Ibid.
235 Ibid.
236 Ibid.
Beyond global appeal, Brown and Babcock also hoped to unite and to praise Southern artists. New York journalists like Alvin H. Reiss, an arts writer, noted that this Cultural Olympiad “became a unifying force with representatives of virtually every facet of Southern life involved in the program” by bringing local artists, business partners, and community sponsors together in Atlanta and surrounding towns. The Atlanta and Cultural Olympiad organizers also created Regional Designation Awards in the Humanities to “reflect the Southeast’s cultural diversity” and to “raise the profile of Southeastern arts and humanities” within the United States.

While other Americans were initially skeptical that “fine art, mass entertainment, and Southern culture” could be successfully mixed through these exhibits, the American and international press ultimately agreed on the success of the Olympiad. In Britain’s *The Guardian*, an article entitled “What you will miss in the Cultural Olympiad” pointed to the success of global “theatre, dance, classical, jazz and pop music” in showcasing “Baron Pierre de Coubertin’s Olympic philosophies of cultural exchange and international understanding,” just as organizers had hoped. The contrast between these jazz and classical styles also portrayed the South’s cultural richness by showcasing its multicultural character, not hiding it. While the article distinguished the main attractions as “an intriguing puppet show” and exhibition of “Olympic coins and memorabilia,” not world class exhibitions in the eyes of many Europeans, the spirit of the Cultural Olympiad clearly shined through. Benjamin Forgey of the *Washington Post* agreed with the powerful impact of the Olympiad, and especially of the Rings exhibit, which he described as J. Carter Brown’s “Herculean feat” that “link[ed] human beings across the barriers of centuries, cultures, and continents.”

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239 Applehome, “Culture Will Be A Serious Competitor.”
241 Ibid.
the High Museum of Art in Atlanta had anticipated, international critics did see some exhibits as “hokey,” but the Olympiad was ultimately successful in bringing people together “to see and appreciate works of art of different cultures.”

The Atlanta Opening Ceremony further showed the Atlanta Organizing Committee’s desire to present both America and the South in a positive light and gain international support for this idealized view of the region and nation. As reported by the *Los Angeles Times*, a non-Southern newspaper, this ceremony contained fanfare “carefully crafted to combine both Olympic history and the culture of the nation, the region and the city… includ[ing] cheerleaders and a high school marching band, those most American of symbols, as well as music and dance intrinsic to the South.” This act was part of “Atlanta’s Welcome to the World,” an act explicitly meant to highlight Olympic and Southern traditions and gain international approval. Executive producer of the Opening Ceremony, Don Mischer, was also careful to highlight symbols of Southern progress in moving away from racism by honoring Martin Luther King Jr., “the most famous citizen in Atlanta history,” and a hero to many worldwide. His nonviolent tactics to promote racial equality conveniently overshadowed the many years of violence under the Confederacy and the Ku Klux Klan that formerly defined the South.

Similarly, Atlanta organizers chose Muhammad Ali, an internationally renowned boxer and African-American figure, to be the final torch bearer. Ali was remembered in Olympic history for winning a gold medal in light heavyweight boxing in the 1960 Rome Olympics and then supposedly tossing it “into the Louisville River to protest prejudice in his home country,” in a well-known story. Choosing him as the torch bearer 36 years later seemed like a message from the Atlanta organizers that the New South had developed into the more equal society Ali called for many years ago. As Ali lit the

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243 Applebome, “Culture Will Be A Serious Competitor.”
246 Brennan and Frey, “Centennial Celebration”
torch, even while suffering from Parkinson’s syndrome, he embodied “the spirit of human endeavor…in this city whose history has been shaped by civil war and civil rights.” While some viewers were angered by Ali’s presence and felt he had been exploited for the organizer’s Olympic vision, Young remarked that this choice was meant to honor Ali and that after many meetings “it was considered appropriate for Ali to light the flame, and he was pleased to agree.”

Therefore, Ali’s selection also exemplified Young’s vision of drawing together white and black political and economic leaders in Atlanta to support the Games. According to British journalist David Miller, the two legendary figures of Ali and King shared “careers [that] reached around the globe [and] personalities [that] spoke the same message” of freedom for African-Americans, which led the arrival of the New South on the global stage. In a week when the electronics for the ceremony and transportation networks had rarely worked on time, the Opening Ceremony’s focus on these civil rights leaders “remain[ed] tasteful and enormously colourful” and seemed to be “the one thing Atlanta got right” in the eyes of the international press.

This imagery successfully supported the organizers’ idealized views of the South as a modern, unified nation.

The Atlanta organizers subtly inserted another renowned athlete into the torch relay to represent the progress the South had made in racial equality since the 1960s. Tommie Smith, a track

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250 Miller, “Ali’s spirit crowns arrival of Deep South on world stage.”
251 Fox, “Crowds weep at Ali’s courage.”
and field Olympic gold medalist from the 1968 Mexico City Games, had been booed for raising “his black leather gloved hand in a clinched fist black power salute” during the Star Spangled Banner. He was subsequently kicked off of the American Olympic team and sent home for this protest against racial discrimination. But, 28 years later, the Atlanta organizers invited Smith to run a leg of the Olympic torch run in Los Angeles, thus honoring him for his civil rights activism that initially made him vilified in America. Smith was invited by Atlanta organizers to show the world how his demands for racial equality had been met in the New South. With these scenes and characters meant for global appeal, Pennsylvanian journalist Art Thiel concluded that, “battling tirelessly against stereotypes of the American South…Atlanta just might have made it over the hump Friday night” and might enjoy global credibility.

To the further delight of Billy Payne, co-chairman of the Atlanta Organizing Committee, who “vowed to organize the largest peacetime event ever and the best Olympics in the 100-year history of the modern Games,” these Opening Ceremonies represented the first time that every nation invited to compete attended. International journalists were equally impressed with the size and style of these opening ceremonies. Scottish journalist Roy MacGregor noted that “Atlanta had promised the largest and best opening ceremonies since the parade of nations was added…and they certainly delivered on size” and style, praising the tribute to Martin Luther King Jr. and the opening dance “in the five Olympic colors.” This article was even entitled, “Give a gold for Atlanta’s Opening Ceremonies.”

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253 Hutchinson, “Atlanta Games.”
254 Ibid.
255 Ibid.
clearly showing Scottish approval of this idealized view of the nation and the region. These initially positive international reviews of the Games would not last long, though.

IV. The Pipe Bomb Terror Attack: A False Alarm for International Journalists Looking for Continued Southern Missteps

While both the Mexico City and Munich Games featured disruptive terrorist events that threatened idealized views of these nations, Atlanta’s pipe bomb terror attack was disruptive but did not overturn the vision of Atlanta as a modern, unified nation to the same extent as previous terror attacks. At 1:21 a.m. on Saturday, July 27, 1996, a home-made pipe bomb explosion during a concert in Centennial Park killed one, injured hundreds, and likely caused a heart attack killing another.

Roughly 18 minutes before the explosion, an anonymous call reported to a 911 operator that a bomb would go off in the next 30 minutes. Around the time of the call, a Georgia Bureau of Investigation officer responded to a report from a security guard of a suspicious green backpack leaning against the sound tower near the stage. As officers responded, they attempted to evacuate the crowd from the park, “but the young, jolly revelers, many waving cups of beer, didn’t take directions very well.” While the evacuation continued, “suddenly there was a flash of light and a boom…the smell of gunpowder filled the air.” Some spectators mistook the explosion for a thrilling part of the show, and few in the crowd comprehended what was happening. According to eyewitness Greg Addison, many spectators were in shock. He described the scene as people staring at each other, “like, ‘Was that a bomb?’” “Until the ground shook and the peace was shattered,” the Centennial Park grounds had served as an international melting park for athletes and spectators and the commercial hub for the Games with sponsored pavilions and stages, not a site for a terrorist attack.

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259 Brennan and Frey, “Centennial Celebration”
259 MacGregor, “OK, Let’s Go.”
262 Ibid.
At the time, it did not appear that the bombing was claimed by any terrorist group or had a purpose. President Clinton condemned this act as an “evil act of terror” in the days following the attack, though, and the FBI immediately labelled the bombing an act of terrorism, one that was likely “homegrown.” Many believed that this apparent terrorist attack “tried to cast a pall of horror on a magnificent international spectacle of sport,” or perhaps to gain attention for the unspecified cause through the international stage of the Olympics. And just as the decision was made to carry on the Games after the attack in Munich 1972, the Atlanta organizers and the I.O.C. called for the Games to continue as planned on Saturday. While several entrances were closed and “soldiers toting machine guns patrolled the grandstands” throughout Saturday, the events went on without a hitch. And by Saturday afternoon, authorities were already expressing confidence that the criminals would be swiftly captured. By Sunday, “the Games’ festive atmosphere seemed restored,” and tourists once again filled Centennial Park when it was re-opened.

In addition to this vote of confidence in restoring the Games so quickly, international and American press appeared confident that Atlanta’s Olympic spirit would not be extinguished by this attack. Atlanta residents and visitors were “determined not to let terrorism succeed,” and grief quickly turned to anger over this tragic bombing attack. The London Times concurred that while terrorism was newer to the United States than to European and middle eastern countries, Americans “would not be intimidated” and wanted to continue life and the Games as normal. While this same journalist denounced “the misguided, hourly coverage by NBC television, overdramatizing the horror,” he concluded that the Olympic spirit was enough to quickly overcome this tragedy and to restore Olympic

263 Senn, 256.
265 Ibid.
266 Senn, 256.
267 Ibid.
268 Senn, 256.
269 Ibid.
Another journalist not writing from the South, Karen Brandon of the *Chicago Tribune*, thought that this attack might bring Atlanta some much needed international sympathy: “The world, which only a day earlier was grumbling about things gone awry, may take a more charitable view of the city now marred by tragedy.” These smaller events the international press had been grumbling about, which included slow technology, excessive commercialism, and memories of Georgia’s confederate past, ultimately proved to be more of a threat to the organizer’s idealized view of Atlanta and the South than the terrorist attack.

Besides the loss of life and the concern about security flaws, this terrorist attack was a minor scandal for the Atlanta organizers because the perpetrator and motives were unknown. Therefore, it could not be known if the attack stemmed from motives that could have undermined idealized views of Atlanta by bringing racism or Confederate sympathies to prominence. When white, male security guard Richard Jewell was first praised as a “hero” for finding the bomb and later as a “villain” after becoming the FBI’s primary suspect for the attack, the international press was more involved with the development of these accusations than with promoting any theories of racially charged attacks. For example, the Toronto CBC TV broadcast on July 30, 1996, closely followed Jewell’s story without speculating on a motive. This confusion over the suspect and lack of information on the motive of the attack further safeguarded Atlanta’s idealized view of the Games. This protective lack of information lasted until 2005 when Eric Rudolph was captured and confessed to the Olympic bombing and several similar attacks. In his confession, Rudolph acknowledged that he used the world stage of the Olympics to show his disenchantment with the U.S. government for supporting abortion. The Atlanta organizers were lucky that Rudolph, a known “anti-abortion, anti-gay, and anti-Semitic” right-

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272 Miller, “Olympic spirit offers triumph over terrorism.”
273 Brandon, “Atlanta also a victim.”
wing Christian, did not intend or did not confess to using the global attention of the Olympics to undermine the racial equality on show at the Atlanta Games.

However, seemingly less violent and smaller controversies over commercialism and the South’s Confederate past did threaten the Atlanta organizer’s idealized view of the Southern nation. Ultimately, the nature of international media coverage still determined the impact of these conflicts on the development of Southern and American national narratives during and after the Olympics.

V. The Confederate Flag and Stone Mountain: Internal Fractures within the South Become Apparent

Although the organizers’ hopes for these Olympics were well represented in the Opening Ceremony and could not be overcome by the pipe bombing attack, this idealized view of the South was undermined by conflicts with Atlanta’s Confederate past leading up to and during the Games. While the pipe bomb terrorist attack was not seen as representative of these conflicting views of the nation, as the terror attacks in the Mexico City and Munich Games had been, international journalists dissected controversies surrounding lingering memories of the Confederacy. As early as 1992, the I.O.C. and the world debated conflicting views of the New South emerging from Confederate symbols like the monuments at Stone Mountain and the Confederate battle flag still present on the Georgia state flag during the Olympics.

Atlanta was known to many as the twin birth place of Gone With The Wind and the Civil Rights Movement, which represent the old and the “new” South.277 Similarly, Stone Mountain Park was the host site for Olympic cycling, archery, and tennis, drawing diverse international competitors and spectators; it was also the site of granite monuments of Civil War generals Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee, as well as the president of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis. In the months leading up

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277 Harrison, “Olympics Spark Debate.”
to the Games, Atlanta organizers and park officials decided to “tread lightly…trying not to offend either side” of civil rights activists or conservative white Southerners, but park manager Curtis Branscome emphasized that “it’s a Confederate memorial, and there’s no way getting around that.”

For white Southerners, this park likely seemed harmless and enjoyable, while many black Southerners considered this site a “monument to white supremacy.” Through subtle changes, though, park and Olympic officials attempted to add more to the park to provide other attractions than the Confederate memories. For example, the park started an innovative laser show in 1983 to tell the story of Atlanta’s Confederate history, but for the Olympics, 20 minutes of “musical tributes to Southern jazz, rock, country… and gospel artists” were featured in addition to the Georgia state flag with its Confederate symbols and the “Dixie” song of the Confederacy always present in the show. While Confederate elements were not removed, this display of other Southern culture and music was planned to appeal to a more diverse, international audience.

https://www.stonemountainpark.com/Activities/History-Nature/Confederate-Memorial-Carving

“Veryl Goodnight’s monument ‘The Day the Wall Came Down’ is composed of five horses, one stallion and four mares, running through the rubble of the collapsed Berlin Wall. In this monument, the horses symbolize the personal drive for freedom that is shared by people of all nations.”
www.verylgoodnight.com/wall.htm

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279 Harrison, “Olympics Spark Debate.”
280 Smith, “Stone Mountain laser show shifting focus”
Similarly, the Confederate general monuments were complemented by a monument “honoring a struggle of a far different sort – the fall of the Berlin Wall” placed in the park from 1995-1997, conveniently during the Games, before permanently moving to Texas A&M University.281 The monument’s artist, Veryl Goodnight, hoped this monument would show that “Stone Mountain is much more than a Confederate memorial… and [would] expand the focus of the park greatly.”282 But beyond Goodnight’s wishes for historical diversity at Stone Mountain Park, this semi-permanent location was no coincidence. Georgia Senator Paul Coverdell used his political clout to bring this monument to Stone Mountain during the Olympics to distract from the lingering Confederate memories in the park and to promote the vision of Atlanta as a modern, racially tolerant capital of the New South.283 Furthermore, park officials opened a museum examining the history of Stone Mountain, but this museum was meant to “show the positive impact people have had on the park” and excluded all mentions of the Ku Klux Klan.284 Notably, very few international and local journalists reported this controversial history in a negative light. While the controversy of Stone Mountain’s past was successfully mitigated by these designs to include more historical diversity, the Georgia state flag controversy drew worldwide criticism throughout the Olympics.

Controversy over the Georgia state flag design began as early as 1956 when the Confederate battle standard featuring “St. Andrew’s Cross,” used by pro-slavery Confederates in the Civil War, was first added to the original design to protest the Brown v. Board of Education ruling that integrated Southern public schools.285 The Olympics then shone a spotlight on tensions surrounding the flag.

282 Ibid.
283 Pousner, “Stone Mountain to get sculpture.”
beginning in 1992 with Georgia Governor Miller’s attempt to push legislation through the Georgia House and Senate to remove the Confederate battle emblem. The governor noted that with the “international spotlight” of the Olympics looming over Atlanta, he wanted to “eliminate a vestige of days that are not only gone, but also days that we have no right to be proud of.” He also opposed the negative connotation of the Confederate flag, which was “the fighting flag of those who wanted to preserve a segregated South in the face of the Civil Rights Movement.” This image of Georgia’s unsavory past also directly contradicted the Atlanta organizer’s vision of Atlanta as an international, progressive city that was the birthplace of the Civil Rights Movement. Civil rights activists like Earl T. Shinhoster, Southeast regional director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, supported this decision to alter the flag, saying that “something dramatic needed to be done to promote understanding and greater tolerance.”

However, opposition within Georgia from conservative, rural leaders were not as eager to conform to this unifying view of the region and the nation, even for the Olympics. For example, Charles Lunsford of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, a 15,000 member organization for descendants of Confederate soldiers, argued that taking the Confederate flag off of Georgina’s flag would diminish white Southern nationality by “erasing all vestiges of Confederate symbols and songs.” Other Southern whites similarly claimed that their “heritage was under attack from the Yankee-fied forces of political correctness,” as noted by British reporter Diane Roberts for The Guardian. The Southern League was even founded to alert “like-minded ‘neo-Confederates’ to ‘heritage violations’” and to create a cultural ethnic cleanse for “the Southern nation.”

287 Ibid.
288 Ibid.
289 Ibid.
291 Ibid.
professor and member of the Southern League, believed that “the so-called Rebel flag is the flag of the South – symbol of many good things about our culture and history that are dear to the hearts of Southerners,” presumably white Southerners in his line of thought. To these white, Southern men, the Confederate symbolism on the Georgia flag was a symbol of traditional Southern culture that should not be replaced by the diversity and modernity of the New South and should be showed on the world stage. As concluded by Roberts, “one thing is certain: the New South – the South of Bill Clinton, of black mayors in Atlanta and Birmingham, of progressive organisations – is having an identity crisis.” But while international journalists like Roberts could detect this resurgence of racism in the South, the Atlanta organizers did not aid Governor Miller in his campaign to change the flag for fear of causing greater global interest. But by refusing to take a side, these organizers seemed to support conservative, white Southerners.

While these protests and counter-protests created divisions between Georgia’s urban and rural and black and white residents that began to leak to the international press, attention from the International Olympic Committee (I.O.C.) brought greater international scrutiny to this debate in 1994. At the 1994 meeting of the I.O.C., reporters asked Samaranch whether he thought that Georgia should remove this Confederate sign from the flag after demonstrations during the Super Bowl hosted in Atlanta that year. While Samaranch began by responding that “the Americans know best,” he continued to say, “they must realize that the results of these Atlanta Games are very important not only for the city but for the state and the government.” The American delegate to the I.O.C., Anita DeFrantz, interpreted this statement as encouragement for Atlanta to remove the Confederate flag from the state flag, and Samaranch’s comments unquestionably showed the significant impact of this

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292 Roberts, “Ghosts of the gallant South.”
293 Ibid.
295 Ibid.
decision on Georgia as a whole. Still, after this critique from the I.O.C. that was covered worldwide and the failure of Governor Miller to gather enough support to alter the flag, Atlanta organizers did not take direct action to restart the legislative process or to ban the flag.

With the state flag still including Confederate symbols in July 1996, groups of Atlanta civil rights activists were eager to “use the world stage of the Olympic Games to call attention to the flag,” just as Mexico City activists and the Black September terrorists had done in previous Games. Former Atlanta mayor and African-American community leader, Maynard Jackson, passionately argued that Atlanta is “an extraordinary city that will welcome this diverse world, this world where two-thirds of its people are colored people, coming into this Southern city smack in the middle of the old Confederacy with a flag that is a constant, negative reminder of slavery and segregation.” The Anti-Racist Freedom Coalition, led by Rev. Hosea Williams and a group of 75 black and white supporters, burned the Georgia state flag at the Capitol under the shadows of the Olympic torch only one month before the Games began to protest the lingering Confederate symbol. Another pro-civil rights group, The Coalition to Change the Flag, planned to protest the state flag where it was flown over Atlanta government buildings during the Olympics.

On the other hand, Confederate sympathizers like the Sons of Confederate Veterans celebrated their victory in keeping the flag by trying to draw global attention to the flag and Southern traditions just month before the games. For example, the Sons celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Confederate Memorial Day holiday in April 1996. Georgia Sons Commander James Reynolds

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295 Clarey, “I.O.C. Looks to Atlanta, and a New Georgia Flag.”
299 Ibid.
300 Ibid.
further planned to “put a positive spin on Rebel heritage” and advertise their Southern history while the world was watching by enacting a battle in Newnan, a small town south of Atlanta, and holding a Confederate Ball at Stone Mountain in July, weeks before the Opening Ceremony.\textsuperscript{302} Rural, white Southerners were delighted that the “politically correct” New South, even under the spotlight of the Olympics, could not strip away this symbol of Confederate heritage from the Georgia state flag.

Atlanta organizers worried that in these rural areas, visitors would see the controversial state flag and Confederate “flags in their yards, Confederate monuments in the courthouse square, cemeteries, antebellum houses,” but this could not be prevented.\textsuperscript{303} Because nearly 70\% of Georgia’s population was Caucasian, it was not surprising that a 1996 survey concluded that nearly half of Georgia’s population, and 70\% of whites, were opposed to changing the flag.\textsuperscript{304} However, a few editorials written for the \textit{Atlanta Constitution} by white Southerners opposing the Sons professed fear that the message of the Sons focused not on Atlanta’s future and overcoming of racial inequality, but rather on “the legacy of the Confederacy [which] is contrary to equality” and would give off the sense that the Confederacy was the height of Southern history when many did not agree.\textsuperscript{305}

While Governor Miller’s support and activist pleas were not enough to change the state flag, in June of 1996, Atlanta Games organizers “decided not to fly the Georgia flag over arenas they control,” but the flag with its Confederate emblem would still fly over government buildings.\textsuperscript{306} Several weeks later on July 12, 1996, the organizers revised this ruling to also include removing the state flag from city hall and other county buildings, although they still could not mandate the flag not being used at state buildings.\textsuperscript{307} Furthermore, organizers prohibited any American or Southern flag at all Olympic venues, which they cited as a “longstanding Games tradition,” but also one that helped them to control

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{302} Torpy, “Confederate Sons seeking higher profile after Confederate Memorial Day.”
\footnotetext{303} Spaid, “Cultural Symbols Of the Old South Clash.”
\footnotetext{304} Campbell, “Atlanta Group pledges to use Olympics.”
\footnotetext{306} Dembner, “Georgia Flag Sparks Protest”
\footnotetext{307} Spaid, “Cultural Symbols Of the Old South Clash.”
\end{footnotes}
protestors in plain sight and unregulated displays of the state flag.\textsuperscript{308} In 2018, Georgia’s state flag still includes references to the state’s Confederate history. The first change to the state flag was approved in 2001 when the flag was redesigned to feature the state seal with a small banner underneath entitled “Georgia’s History” that included five previous state flag designs, even the Confederate battle flag.\textsuperscript{309} 

The current Georgia state flag was adopted in 2003 and included the thirteen-star version of the “first national flag of the Confederacy—the so-called Stars and bars— with the Georgia state seal in the center of the circle of stars.”\textsuperscript{310} 

While there was little commentary on the flag debate during the Games, international coverage of the debate before the Games from The Toronto Globe and Mail, The London Times, and The Guardian and non-Southern newspapers like The Los Angeles Times, The New York Times, and The Wall Street Journal, as well as the disturbing remnants of overtly racist white Southern groups, made it difficult for the world to ignore the unravelling image of Atlanta as a capital of the New South and its supposed values of racial equality. In Diane Robert’s damning article published in The Guardian, she ruined the idealized view of Atlanta organizers by concluding that “with the resurgence of overt racism in the South, the Olympic torch, symbol of diversity on the grandest scale, will recall not just Atlanta's

\textsuperscript{308} Spaid, “Cultural Symbols Of the Old South Clash.”
\textsuperscript{310} Ibid.
Phoenix, rising out of the ashes Sherman left on his incendiary march to the sea, but the crosses that used to flame on nearby Stone Mountain and the 40 burned black churches across the South.  

Throughout this years long debate over the representation of Georgia’s confederate past, and its international criticism, Atlanta organizers and the world learned that William Faulkner had been right all along: “The past is never dead. It’s not even past.”

VI. American Commercialism: The Final Straw for the International Press

As if these lingering Confederate sympathies had not harmed the Atlanta Games enough, the international press also criticized Atlanta and America more broadly for the over-commercialism of the Olympics. Atlanta, home to Chick-Fil-A and Coca-Cola, has always been known as a hub for Southern business, and commercialism. But international critics argued that this commercialism took the focus away from the Olympic spirit in a traditionally American move to steal the global spotlight to turn a profit. These critics were not wrong. For example, “the number of advertising hoardings [billboards] in the city, already the highest per capita in the US, grew” as the Olympics dawned on Atlanta and new ordinances were passed allowing skyscrapers to become advertising boards and increasing local licenses for product sales and concessions. Days after the Opening Ceremony, non-Southern journalists like Howie Evans had already nicknamed the Atlanta Games the “Corporate Games” that “sold their souls” to commercialism and failed to protect the magic of global athletic competition. Another popular nickname assigned to the Games was “‘The Official Sports Marketing Event of the Coca-Cola Corporation,” a stab at the corporation at the heart of Atlanta and its sponsorship and advertising of the Games. In a description of the first sights of Atlanta during the Games, local

311 Roberts, “Ghosts of the gallant South.”
313 Goldblatt, 361.
journalist Dave Barry recalled that “it look[ed] as though a giant vacuum cleaner went around sucking up all the T-shirt, hat, souvenir and corn dog booths in all the county fairs in America and then spewed them out all over the streets,” in addition to a “six-story Coke bottle.”\footnote{Barry, “Commercialism rules Atlanta’s chaos.”} Even Dr. Leroy Walker, the U.S. Olympic Committee president, admitted to “‘commercial overkill’” in Atlanta.\footnote{Evans, “Opening Ceremonies mark commercialism.”}

Unsurprisingly, other American cities worried that Atlanta had hurt their chances of attracting international sporting events because Atlanta “played to the worst fears of the international community that American cannot handle the Games with order and with taste.”\footnote{“Commercialism, Partying In Atlanta Criticized,” \textit{New Pittsburgh Courier}, August 24, 1996. https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/docview/201799674} To underscore the severity of international criticism, it was reported that “the I.O.C. was more concerned about the commercialization than the bomb set off in Centennial Park.”\footnote{Ibid.} Juan Antonio Samaranch appeared to further bash the commercialism and chaos of the Atlanta Olympics by stopping short of calling these Games “the best ever” as he had traditionally praised prior host cities in their Closing Ceremonies.\footnote{The Associated Press, “Olympic Hindsight: Commercialism is criticized by Samaranch,” \textit{Morning Star}, August 5, 1996. https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/docview/285548586} To sum it up, many international and non-Southern journalists left Atlanta after hardly mentioning athletics. For example, Tony Kornheiser of the \textit{Washington Post} recalled that, “when I close my eyes and picture Atlanta, I see a giant Miller Lite can or giant Bud can…and I’ll reflect on…the crush of people in Centennial Park waiting in line to get into ‘The Super Store.’”\footnote{Tony Kornheiser, “The End is Such a Deflating Experience,” \textit{Washington Post}, August 5, 1996. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/sports/olympics/daily/aug/05/k5.htm} While Atlanta was often criticized as not being representative of the ideals of the New South or American equality from within and outside of America, the commercialism of these Atlanta Games was disdained by almost all commentators. Americans felt like it poisoned their international reputation and credibility, and international journalists were shocked by the commercial values that ultimately overtook the Olympic
spirit. The pipe bomb terrorist attack was a mild disaster compared to international backlash over commercialism and lingering Confederate memories in Atlanta.

VII. Conclusion

While the 1996 Atlanta Games were meant to show New South and American modernity through racial equality, controversies over Confederate symbols and over-commercialism carried Atlanta and America back to its unfortunate recent history. As explained by Benedict Anderson, “if nation-states are widely conceded to be ‘new’ and ‘historical,’ the nations to which they give political expression always loom out of an immemorial past.”322 The international media dredging up Atlanta’s Confederate past proved that Atlanta could not escape its past history even after attempting to reinvent nationalism through mass media appeals. International criticism of this lingering racism and technological and infrastructure failures ultimately derailed the Atlanta organizers’ idealized visions of a modern, progressive, and united South. While both the Mexico City and Munich Games featured disruptive terrorist events that threatened idealized views of these nations, Atlanta proved that even for seemingly less violent and smaller controversies over commercialism and the South’s Confederate past, the nature of international media coverage ultimately determined how much impact these conflicts had on the development of national narratives during and after the Olympics. Like their predecessors, the Atlanta organizers could not control the international images and interpretations of the Games, but they emerged from the Games without the kind of violence that haunted the earlier Olympics.

322 Anderson, 11.
Conclusion: The Olympics and National Identity: What Changes and What Stays the Same

The 1968 Mexico City, 1972 Munich, and 1996 Atlanta Games exemplified how international sporting events like the Olympics helped the international media define and remember national identities. In particular, there were often several conflicting views of the host nation within the “imagined political communities” that hosted each of these Olympic Games, but through international exposure, the media sorted out these contested national identities and generally validated one view.\textsuperscript{323} To shape these national identities, each host nation used the Olympics to show modernity, to mitigate conflict within the nation, and to influence media coverage that determined how the nation was remembered.

The most unifying trend among Mexico City, Munich, and Atlanta was the Olympic organizers’ dedication to promoting views of peaceful, modern nations and to overcoming negative national images. All three organizing teams used tactics such as architecture and design, Opening and Closing Ceremony programs, and Cultural Olympiads to garner favorable impressions from the visiting international press and members of the nation itself. For example, the 1968 Mexico City Games logo symbolized the integration of Mexico’s “ethnic past with its modern future” by featuring an ancient Huichol tribe design and modern Op Art style.\textsuperscript{324} Hoping to further distance Mexico from its “mañana image,” the Mexican Organizing Committee revived the Cultural Olympiad to showcase modern Mexican art. Similarly, West German organizers were so anxious to distance the Munich Olympics from the Berlin Games (“Hitler’s Games”) that they created a light blue color scheme symbolizing peace, built futuristic glass stadiums referred to as “the architecture of democracy,” and enlisted soldiers as supporters and ushers instead of as security enforcers. Furthermore, the Atlanta Organizing

\textsuperscript{323} Anderson, 6.
\textsuperscript{324} Brewster and Brewster, 59.
Committee featured white and black political and economic leaders of Atlanta, like Billy Payne and Andrew Young, who shared a joint agenda in presenting an idealized vision of the New South and showing progress that had changed Atlanta’s Confederate, racist past. The Atlanta Opening Ceremony also showcased a modern, multicultural society by combining jazz and classical music, and the program honored progressive heroes like Martin Luther King Jr. instead of the Ku Klux Klan.

But despite organizers’ plans to show modern, peaceful, and unified nations, each national narrative was contested. In each case, these differing views were represented by conflicts before or during the Games. In Mexico City, Mexican student and worker activists diminished the elites’ vision of peace and stability by protesting Mexico’s “authoritarian political system” and wasteful Olympic expenditures. These divisive views culminated in the Tlatelolco Massacre, where the Mexican government helped plan an attack on peaceful student protests to shut down the threat to the idealized vision of the Mexican nation. Atlanta, like Mexico City, faced internal dissent before the Games between rural, white supporters of “Southern heritage” and urban, black critics of Atlanta’s Confederate past. However, these clashing views culminated in several smaller debates, not defining militaristic events like the Tlatelolco Massacre. The violent pipe bombing attack during the Atlanta Games was not seen as representative of conflicting, contemporary views of the nation. Instead, international journalists attacked symbols of Atlanta’s lingering racist, divisive history, like the state flag’s inclusion of the Confederate flag and memorials to Confederate leaders like Stone Mountain, which undermined Atlanta’s New South vision. While Mexico City contained activist protests and Atlanta was less successful in mitigating Confederate-related protests, Munich organizers had the most difficult time handling the crisis of the Black September terrorist attack. While the attack did not stem from within Germany or represent divisive views from within the German nation, this attack on Israeli athletes on German soil reminded spectators of Germany’s Nazi past. The resulting international

325 Flaherty, 16.
326 Ibid., 46.
response was critical enough to create internal fractures that destroyed the organizers’ hope to show a peaceful, unified West German nation.

Finally, the view of each host nation was cemented or destroyed by the opinion and coverage of the international press. Mexico City organizers were the most successful in showcasing an idealized view of the nation by controlling international media perceptions. In fact, international articles praised the Mexican government for creating a strong perception of new, modern, and peaceful nation and denounced “the apparent student unrest.”327 When one international journalist, *Guardian* reporter John Rodda, who was held at gunpoint during the Massacre, wrote openly critical articles exposing the Massacre, the international community denounced him as insane and traumatized. In the short term, the official narrative of Mexican nationalism was dominant because there was no international pressure on the Mexican government to recognize the critiques presented in the student activists’ nationalism.

Once again, Atlanta organizers were not as successful in controlling the conflict or international media as Mexico City organizers, and controversies over Confederate symbols and over-commercialism carried Atlanta and America back to its unfortunate recent history instead of promoting the New South and American modernity. This “resurgence of overt racism in the South” apparent to international journalists was condemned as turning the Olympic torch into a symbol of the Ku Klux Klan or resistance to Sherman’s march, though this was contrary to the Atlanta organizers’ hopes and reinforced the popularity of Southern Confederate groups who defended the “Old South.”328 Similarly, the Olympic spirit was also overtaken by commercialism, earning the Games the nicknames the “Corporate Games” or “‘The Official Sports Marketing Event of the Coca-Cola Corporation,’” which deepened American tensions as many cities feared this disdain would detract from their reputations and ability to host world events.329

327 “Letter from Mexico.”
328 Roberts, “Ghosts of the gallant South.”
329 Barry, “Commercialism rules Atlanta’s chaos.”
The idealized image of Munich was also destroyed by the international press. This criticism was so much stronger than that of Atlanta, though, that it created further divisions within West Germany, as evidenced by the many West Germans who were so distraught and full of renewed shame that they pressed charges of manslaughter against Minister of the Interior and German Police. Ultimately, these Munich Games created a less coherent West German national identity by re-awakening comparisons to Nazi Germany and thus blocking the development of the modern, unified West German nation promised in these Games.

These patterns continue to endure and to evolve in the 21st century, as recently seen in the 2018 Winter Olympics held in PyeongChang, South Korea. These Games continued the traditional emphasis on modernity and unity seen in Mexico City, Munich, and Atlanta through similar tactics such as Opening Ceremony statements and political agreements. But this idealized view of the nation was also contested during the Games, and media coverage of the Games will ultimately determine which view of the Korean nation is remembered.

Before the Games, Korea particularly focused on showing technological modernity and Korean unity between North and South Korea. For example, the PyeongChang Olympics Organizing Committee pledged to highlight “Korea’s technological prowess on diverse fronts,” including the stunning use of drones in the Opening Ceremony. Additionally, South Korea’s National Assembly hoped to ensure unity with neighboring North Korea by passing a resolution “urging against political confrontations during the Games” and supporting the Olympics as “an opportunity to foster a lasting peace on the divided Korean Peninsula.” This unified stance was echoed in the Opening Ceremony by a joint North and South Korean team marching in the Parade of Nations carrying a unified flag under the watch of South Korean president, Moon Jae-in, and Kim Yo-jong, the sister of the North

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330 Adam, 349.
Korean leader. Two members of this unified team, Chung Su-hyon of North Korea and Park Jong-ah of South Korea, were also chosen as several of the final torch bearers to further show Korean unity.

However, conflicting views of the Korean nation also appeared through the Olympics, much like the political and class divides evident in Mexico City, Munich, and Atlanta. This conflict did not escalate into a massacre like Mexico City or stem from a terror attack like Munich, but the Korean conflict did mirror Atlanta political and racial divisions shown through less violent conflicts. The world spotlight on PyeongChang during the Olympics drew attention to “why hope for Korean unity may be more myth than reality.” According to University of Southern California professor and author Kyung Moon Hwang, gestures supposedly symbolic of Korean unity like marching and playing hockey together in unified Northern-Southern Korean teams were seen mostly as a “sideshow” that created a temporary, positive relationship that will regress after the “photo-ops and temporary affection” of the Olympics wither away. Similar comments have new created conflicting opinions in South Korea over the appropriateness of relations with North Korea.

Rather than a debate covered in newspapers over a state flag, though, this modern debate occurred over social media and was covered by digital journalists. With the creation of digital sharing platforms and comments, more “ordinary” South Koreans have their opinions broadcast worldwide, and articles appear to be more representative of several points of view. For example, a 2018 survey showed that “more than 70 percent of South Koreans in their 20s were against reunification [with North Korea] and are more interested in domestic issues.” South Koreans were also divided on whether these unifying gestures were appropriate when tensions are so high between North and South

333 Ibid.
335 Ibid.
Korea, with only 40.5 percent supporting the Korean Unification Flag and other symbolic gestures. Some South Koreans like Park Young-joon, a male office worker in his early 30s, believed that “the unified flag and the joint entrance can send a positive signal to the world especially at time of heightened tensions over North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs.” But others like Shin Sung-ah, a 40-year-old female office worker in Seoul, saw the unified flag as “yet another example of North Korea taking advantage of the opportunity to improve its image before an international audience without making any meaningful commitments.” These differing views of the host nation that developed within Korea continue the pattern of internal dissent seen in the 20th century – like conflicting classes in Mexico City, divided opinions after the Black September attack in Munich, and historic segregation and racial conflict in Atlanta — but modern digital technology has allowed historians to take a better sampling of general public opinions. Digital transitions can now even more effectively display the divisive internal responses to the nationalist messages of the Olympics.

Despite these internally fractured views of the Korean nation, the international media has already started to define the legacy of these Games as the “Peace Games” just as the media sanctioned the remembrance of the Mexico City, Munich, and Atlanta Games. According to the Korea Herald, these Olympics represented fierce athletic competition and diplomatic drive to “pave the way for peace” between North and South Korea after a year of heightened tensions. So far, the international press seems to agree. International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach noted that “sport and the IOC have done what we could do” to create political momentum for dialogue between North and South Korea. Even Pope Francis said that North and South Korea used these Olympics to “offer
hope for a world ‘where conflicts can be resolved peacefully through dialogue and reciprocal respect.’”

While the international media’s confirmation of the idealized view of the Korean nation continues to evolve, the PyeongChang 2018 Winter Olympics again evidenced the power of the international media in shaping views of the host nation and the interconnectedness of the Olympics and national narratives. Just as George Orwell noted in his 1945 novel The Sporting Spirit, sport has become “bound up with the rise of nationalism” and “seeing everything in terms of competitive prestige,” especially in the case of Olympic host nations. These political patterns of international sporting events continue to influence the national identities and the competitive national positioning that each host nation promotes by displaying their modernity and unity. The nationalist interpretation of the Olympics will continue into the 21st century, just as Orwell predicted in 1945. As in Mexico City, Munich, and Atlanta, the Korean national narrative was refined by narratives in the international media that covered and reacted to crises of national identity during the Olympics. Over the 50 years since the 1968 Mexico City Olympics, tools for media coverage have evolved to include digital journalism and social media, which may alter the power of the international media. New media may be used to challenge views of the host nation as individual users develop increasingly powerful personal platforms and promote many different opinions about the nation worldwide. However, the links between nationalism, the Olympics, and the international media will endure and continue to help us imagine the role of national identities in the modern world.

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