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## **“They Are Just Like Us”: The 1960 Winter Olympics and U.S.-Soviet Relations**

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My research examined American attitudes towards the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc at the 1960, Squaw Valley Winter Olympics. This includes the press' prevailing attitude in its depictions of American and western European athletes, versus those of Eastern European athletes. Parallels between these and the 1980 Lake Placid Winter Games are of especial import; a Cold War era Olympics, on American soil, pitting American capitalism against Soviet communism, where the underdog Americans score an ice hockey victory over the Soviets en route to a gold medal. In 1980 the ice hockey competition was highly politicized, and historians have devoted increasing attention to how nation states have used sport as a means of justifying national ideologies. Yet in 1960, the same result met little fanfare, and no attention from historians. My research also examined the American government's attitudes towards Soviet Russia to help explain this disconnect. I found that the Soviet Union was at this time making a concerted effort, through diplomacy and sport, to be more conciliatory to the U.S. The American public and government recognized this, and the generally harmonious spirit of the '60 Winter Games is attributable to this fact. The political environment surrounding these games, then, allowed them to be played only in the sporting arena, and not as much in the political arena. This research is based on relevant secondary monographs and articles which explore the rise of international, state-driven sport beginning with the modern Olympics; sport and international politics in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, especially as it pertains to competition between and among capitalism, communism, and fascism; the importance of pageantry and glorification to competing and hosting Olympic nations; the 1980 Olympic hockey competition, and nationalistic bias in Olympic figure skating judging. It is also based on examination of government documents, the Final Report of the VIII Winter Olympic Games, and a variety of contemporary newspapers and mass-circulation magazines such as *Sports Illustrated* and *Time*.

“They Are Just Like Us”:  
The 1960 Winter Olympics and U.S.-Soviet Relations

Joe Schiller

Entering the third and final period of the Olympic gold medal ice hockey game in 1960 at Squaw Valley, California, the United States trailed Czechoslovakia 4-3, when an unlikely visitor appeared in the U.S. locker room. Soviet captain Nikolai Sologubov entered to encourage the Americans and suggest that they take whiffs of oxygen, as the Soviets had during their games during the tournament, to combat the strictures of the mile-high air. All scientific refutation of oxygen's benefits aside, the American side exploded for six third-period goals to win its first ice hockey gold medal, 9-4. But the act transcends hockey, raising important questions about U.S. and Soviet relations in their Cold War context. Certainly, the Americans questioned whether Captain Nik was motivated more by Olympian ideals and athletic amity or by the desire to keep their hated Czech rivals from winning. But given the Cold War rivalry between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, Sologubov's support of a Cold War enemy over a fellow communist nation is surprising.

This episode appeared in the newspapers the next day and was mentioned in passing by such outlets as Sports Illustrated, but few commentators, then or now, devoted serious thought to the implications of Sologubov's gesture. The act was part of a larger shift in American relations with the Soviet Union, or more appropriately, vice versa. In the years leading to 1960 the Soviet Union was making a concerted effort to appear conciliatory to the U.S. and mitigate Cold War tensions. The Soviet athletic machinery was complicit, as early as 1958, until immediately following the games, attempting to appear friendlier to the West than at any time since the Cold War began.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, historians have effectively demonstrated that close study of sport is a worthy lens to view how organized sport relates or reflects societal values on global neo-liberal economics, diplomacy and war, cultural globalization, the construction of national

identity, and media. Many of these topics, to be sure, mark a tangent from sport and international relations, but international relations have seldom been scholars' first priority. Until recently this literature has predominantly been written by specialists in history, law, sports studies, and especially sociology, but not international relations.<sup>1</sup>

Scholars of international relations traditionally concern themselves with formal bilateral relations between nation states that can most easily be subsumed under "politics." As historians Levermore and Budd assert, academic scholarship and common discourse on the topic have tended to place the international sphere in a sort of impersonal "no man's land," hanging in the air between states.<sup>2</sup> By focusing upon issues related to national security, military affairs, and diplomacy—"high politics"—scholars of foreign relations have overlooked some of the equally important interactions between peoples of different countries including, but certainly not limited to organized sport.

Few Americans have the good fortune (if it should be called good) to experience their nation's foreign relations firsthand. Nearly all, however, have the means to participate in or observe amateur or professional sport. Indeed, "Most Americans know more about sports than they do about politics, science, religion, or their own Constitution,"<sup>3</sup> usually much more. While many tend to avoid discussing politics and other controversial subjects in the workplace and many social settings, debating sport is welcomed and encouraged. Even in the context of bitter local or regional rivalry, sport can be openly discussed without risking much more than minor injuries to the combatants' pride. It transcends class, race, and often sexuality and gender. As

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Levermore and Adrian Budd, "Sport and International Relations: Continued Neglect?" in *Sport and International Relations: An Emerging Relationship* eds. Roger Levermore and Adrian Budd. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Dyreson, *Making the American Team: Sport, Culture, and the Olympic Experience* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 1.

many radio stations seem to be devoted solely to sports talk as political talk. The same can be said for television, where several networks, such as ESPN, sports networks under the umbrellas of Comcast and Fox, and even collegiate conference networks like that of the Big 10, are devoted exclusively to sports. Under the guise of sports talk, Americans opine on racial, ethical, social, and moral questions, so it should come as no surprise that scholars are devoting increasing energy to its many manifestations. Certainly, throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the early part of the new millennium, sport has “involved more players, spectators and officials than any other social movement.”<sup>4</sup> It has become difficult to describe America’s fabric without mention of sport’s place in that weave.

Sport attained its present status in large part due to the work of a loosely associated group of American thinkers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As Dyreson argues, the period following Civil War Reconstruction saw rapid modernization, and a resultant rise in industrialization, urbanization, and immigration.

Many intellectuals and much of the public feared these changes would undermine the stability and unity of purpose upon which the republican experiment relied. To combat these less attractive results of modernization, a “critical mass” in American society paradoxically invented a new technology, the “sporting republic,” to create a new national identity for the United States.<sup>5</sup> Sport may be considered “technology,” and thus an inventible commodity because of its likeness to other social technology, like public school systems, or armies and navies, an “organization of human energy designed for problem solving.”<sup>6</sup> When one claims that sport will

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<sup>4</sup> James Riordan, Introduction to *Sport and International Politics: The Impact of Fascism and Communism on Sport* (London: E & FN Spon, 1998), 1.

<sup>5</sup> Dyreson, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 3.

inculcate the values of sportsmanship, team play, and fairness, or control social deviancy and assimilate immigrants, he uses sport as technology. This is exactly what turn-of-the 20<sup>th</sup> century sporting republicans did.

The inventors of the sporting republic were generally northern, urban industrialists, taking a cue, perhaps unwittingly, from their British brethren of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These were both elite and middle class people, some of whom had experience with sport either in college or in local sporting clubs, and came from many strains of society; public moralists, “Eastern Establishment” types, social reformers, municipal administrators, politicians, scientists, teachers, professors, and a new class of athletic organizers, public health advocates, entrepreneurs, and journalists and editors.<sup>7</sup> They popularized the idea of the sporting republic simply by promoting sports’ merits; that it could instill the mores and values of participation and a common sense of purpose lost to rapid modernization, rebuilding a sense of community which they viewed as essential to the survival of the American republican experiment. The diversity of sports’ early adherents allowed for a broad dispersal of the message, and successive waves of advance in transportation and communication technology—transcontinental railroad lines, mass print media—engendered a rapid expansion in the sporting republic’s breadth and scope.

The republic was formed as a means to create a national identity, based on the above, and what good is an identity without a mirror in which to check one’s reflection against the other countries of the world? Additionally, defining sport as technology implies that the values the athlete learns from sport in micro can be applied in macro to foreign relations. The sense of community, region, and ultimately, nation is a natural progression of sport, and this was not lost on the French Baron Pierre de Coubertin, founder of the International Olympic Committee.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 20-21.

Coubertin started the Olympic movement with “a doctrine of ‘universalism,’ which as it appears in the most recent Olympic Charter declared that ‘any form of discrimination with regard to a country or a person on grounds of race, religion politics, gender or otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement.’”<sup>8</sup> In other words, Coubertin believed that fair play on the field would engender fair play off the field. In like vein, the proponents of the sporting republic worked on the assumption that sport could provide a moral equivalent for war, where competition on the field, as Dyreson noted, was good enough, and could make traditional, real war obsolete<sup>9</sup>. This notion also creates an inextricable bond between sport and nationalism, where athletes have become proxy soldiers, representing their nation in conflicts abroad. But in 1916, the battle was real, fought by trained soldiers on the battlefield, not by athletes on the playing field.

The advent of World War I rendered the 1916 Berlin Olympics, the sporting republic’s most outward illustration of its virtues, impotent. It also dashed the notion that athletes had replaced soldiers for foreign relations purposes and silenced the intellectuals and public who had promoted sport as moral equivalent for war. Because the war catalyzed a renewed nationalism, the importance of sport to this end was significantly minimized and prompted the collapse of the sporting republic. The intellectuals who conceived of and upheld the idea became disenchanted with its viability as a vehicle for social change and began to regard sport the way our present day sporting illiterate do, as a mindless manifestation of mass culture.<sup>10</sup>

Although the decline of the sporting republic was very real, sport itself became increasingly popular and increasingly politicized as the century progressed. Where it had perhaps

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<sup>8</sup> Chris Berg, “Politics, Not Sport, is the Purpose of the Olympic Games,” *IPA Review* (July 2008), 15.

<sup>9</sup> Dyreson, 199.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 202



lost some moral and ethical weight, sport did not simply shrink from the American consciousness but instead revealed itself to be highly marketable and profitable for entrepreneurs after the Great War. This meant capitalizing on sport in an urban culture driven by a consumer base which embraced professional sport as a spectator, leisure activity. This trend, to be sure, only removed any moral heft it still carried.<sup>11</sup> Sport as a social technology had given way to sport as a consumer product. This will be visible throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its many and varied interpretations of amateurism.

A business writer who frequently touches on the Olympic Games, John Milton-Smith ably applies business ethics to the Olympic movement, arguing that our present-day disillusionment with compromised Olympic virtues mirrors the trend in business whereby society has become disenchanted with the latent effects of globalization—a win at any cost attitude, commercial exploitation by multi-national corporations, national rivalry, corruption, and the relative disparity of states' competitive advantages. He also states that our modern Games are based on anachronism: that “The idea that amateur sport is both the key to individual moral development and world harmony is largely an invention of the British aristocracy.”<sup>12</sup> An American invention too, as we have seen.

Art critic and historian Michael Mackenzie uses artist Leni Riefenstahl's propagandistic film, *Olympia*, on the 1936 “Nazi Games,” to prove the importance of sport to politics in that era. The Nazi regime was faced with a difficult situation when it inherited the Olympics from the Weimar Republic with its ascendancy to power in Germany. The party's ideology rejected the

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> John Milton-Smith, “Ethics, The Olympics and the Search for Global Values,” *Journal of Business Ethics* 35.2 (January 2002), 131.

Olympic movement for its "internationalism and pacifism," putting the games in doubt.<sup>13</sup> Instead of cancelling the games though, the Nazis resolved to put on the most lavish games to date, showcasing German achievement and setting a standard for nationalistic one-upmanship in Olympic pageantry which thrives today. They apparently invented the modern torch relay in order to "ferry Western journalists around idyllic German villages, in support of the Nazi's rural ideology."<sup>14</sup> The Nazis also could use this platform to showcase its fusion of sport and politics, whereby sport held social import for the purposes of health and wellness.

The Olympic and political historian Christopher R. Hill's title, "Keeping Politics in Sport," is a clear admission and assumption that the two are inextricably linked. Just before the 1996 Atlanta summer games opened, he raised the interesting point that although the IOC could have made a compelling and logical case for awarding the centenary Olympics to Athens, the original site of the modern Games, they instead chose Atlanta, "the home of CNN, Coca-Cola and the Atlanta Braves."<sup>15</sup> This trend toward commercialization had emerged during and after WWI just as the idea of the sporting republic declined. According to Hill, the real politicization of the modern Olympics is a matter of recognition. The International Olympic Committee's balance between universalism and the too-generous acceptance of malevolent or peripheral states has caused this crisis of acceptance. This is the case of the two Chinas, two Germanys and two Koreas in the period following World War II, battling for the legitimacy that the IOC's recognition lends to a state. Whichever one gains acceptance by the IOC becomes the "real" China, "real" Germany, or "real" Korea. This is paramount to nations not so that their athletes

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<sup>13</sup> Michael Mackenzie, "From Athens to Berlin: The 1936 Olympics and Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia*," *Critical Inquiry* 29.2 (Winter 2003), 302.

<sup>14</sup> Berg, 17.

<sup>15</sup> Christopher R. Hill, "Keeping Politics in Sports," *The World Today* 52.7 (July 1996), 192.

may participate, but so that the nation itself may capitalize on the commercial profitability of the Games, and the political recognition as a member of the world order, the Olympic movement.

Foreign relations specialist Allen Guttman studies “The Cold War and the Olympics,” paying special attention to the 1980 U.S. boycott of the Moscow Summer Games, and the subsequent Soviet retaliation by refusing to attend the ‘84 Los Angeles Summer games. Guttman argues that the Cold War rivalry is “one of the most dramatic aspects of the modern Olympics,” and that “propagandists on both sides of the Iron Curtain have presented the competition...as a portentous symbolic struggle between two ideological systems.”<sup>16</sup> The Soviet Union’s bid to join the International Olympic Committee, Guttman notes, strained the IOC’s doctrine of universalism, as many Western Olympic Committees were reluctant to accept the bid. Most important, according to Guttman, was not ideology, but behavior, for the incident that led to the boycotts was not really ideological, but tactical: the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late 1979.

Historian Donald Abelson explores this intersection of Olympic sport and politics more acutely, using the 1980 “Miracle on Ice” at Lake Placid, New York as a lens. During the 1980 Winter Games, the United States ice hockey team met the Soviet team in the medal round. This match pitted the Americans, composed primarily of collegiate level players, against a seasoned, veteran Soviet squad that many experts believed to be the best hockey team the world had ever seen. While most of the American players were only near twenty years of age, some of the Soviet players were competing in their third Olympic tournament. The underdog Americans beat the Soviet juggernaut on their way to the gold medal. It is regarded by many as the greatest American sporting moment of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Abelson delves into the Cold War rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, examining the way in which the event was

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<sup>16</sup> Allen Guttman, “The Cold War and the Olympics,” *International Journal* 43.4 (Autumn 1988), 554.

“catapulted from the hockey arena to the political arena.”<sup>17</sup> He calls attempts by American politicians, notably President Jimmy Carter, to capitalize on the popularity of the hockey team, as blatant opportunism. Yet he recognizes the ease with which any competition between the superpowers was politicized during the Cold War, and that of them all, this was probably most captivating, and therefore the political opportunism comes as no surprise.<sup>18</sup>

This study examines the 1960 Squaw Valley Olympic Winter Games in light of several important, converging interests, such as the intersection of entrepreneurship and the games, manifest in one real estate developer and his Sierra Mountain Resort; the lure of pageantry, nationalism, and glory bestowed on the host nation; Soviet-American Cold War rivalry, and the prevailing attitudes of American media and the public toward this engagement; questions of amateurism and the future of the Olympic movement, of especial interest to one IOC President, Avery Brundage. All of these predict themes of our modern sporting and Olympic landscape, where nations use the Games to upgrade infrastructure and showcase their thriving economy in fits of nationalism, like China in 2008, and bodies like the NCAA wrestle with definitions of amateurism in light especially of college athletic recruiting violations and untoward payments to athletes.

Over the course of eleven days in February 1960, the VIII Olympiad descended upon a little-known resort town in the California Sierra Nevada, near Lake Tahoe. An American maverick named Alec Cushing had, thanks to shrewd business sense and financing from the California legislature, seemingly swindled the games from deserving European locales, which led purist observers to call for an end to the Winter Games altogether for their bastardizations of

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<sup>17</sup> Donald E. Abelson, “Politics on Ice: The United States, the Soviet Union, and a Hockey Game in Lake Placid,” *Canadian Review of American Studies* 40.1 (2010), 63.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 89.

amateurism. The Soviets were making only their second appearance at the Winter Games, on American soil, no less, and they reaped an impressive haul in the final “unofficial” medal count, significant given the efforts of both superpowers to use those counts to showcase the superiority of their respective systems. The Cold War was about a decade in progress, each side feeling out the exigencies of this uncomfortable arrangement. The United States crafted an unlikely upset of the Soviets in ice hockey, en route to the first American gold medal in that sport. These were the final Olympic Games before those that, as Maraniss claims, “changed the world,”<sup>19</sup> but that does not mean they were of a different, earlier era, but rather puts them on the cusp of the Olympic movement as we know it. Television and print coverage of the games was burgeoning. The forces which allow Maraniss to anoint the 1960 Rome Summer Games as those that changed the world were largely in motion by the time the athletes departed Squaw Valley. It is possible that the only factor holding them back from a similar anointing is the diminished scope of the sports included on the winter card, relative to their summer counterparts.

The increasing commercialization of amateur competition, which came at the expense of the idealized sporting republic, is central to the 1960 Winter Games even finding a home at Squaw Valley. In 1955, a former New York law clerk, Alec Cushing, flying by the seat of his pants, “out-talked Aspen, Lake Placid, and Reno’s Ski Bowl to win the nomination...as America’s candidate for 1960,”<sup>20</sup> despite the fact that his resort had been open less than six years and was his first venture of the kind. From there, Cushing revved his “steam roller to get the games,”<sup>21</sup> touring every international winter sporting event he could reach—at the 1955 world bobsled championships at St. Moritz he secured the ‘58 event in that sport for his own

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<sup>19</sup> David Maraniss, *Rome 1960: The Olympics that Changed the World* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 2008).

<sup>20</sup> David Hulburd, “Bonanza in Squaw Valley,” *Sports Illustrated*, July 11, 1955.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

resort, which at that time lacked a bobsled run! The international contacts Cushing made in such travels helped him duplicate his USOC speaking success when he took his presentation to the International Olympic Committee.

Although World War I dashed hopes that sport could replace war, the notion that sport could stand as war's moral equivalent survived the sporting republic left after its demise was the culture of international competition fostered by the idea of sport as moral equivalent for war. Though two world wars had significantly undermined the sporting republic's moral footing, the competition it encouraged, if unintentionally, remained. But sport was not the only arena for this competition. It also played out in the kitchen. At the 1959 American National Exhibition in Moscow, then Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev displayed this innate ability of the two sides to compete in virtually anything. On the opening day of the exhibition the two dignitaries traded verbal barbs, especially with regard to the display of a prototypical American kitchen. Khrushchev dismissed the model kitchen as propaganda, alleging that not every American could afford such appliances and furnishings as appeared in the exhibit—microwave, dishwasher, refrigerator, and other small appliances. Nixon countered that the kitchen was that of a \$14,000 home, one which even striking U.S. steel workers could easily afford. The stubborn Khrushchev only implicitly acknowledged the merits of Western technology by asserting that “in another seven years we will be on the same level as America.”<sup>22</sup> The “kitchen debate” illustrates the lengths to which the superpowers would go to compete.

The model kitchen reflected the confidence and prosperity of postwar America, an age that witnessed new material comforts, allowed for the construction of an interstate highway

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<sup>22</sup> Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (New York: St. Martin's, 1997), 179.

system, and the rapid construction of suburbs filled with two-car garages. The federal budget was at an all-time, peacetime high; we developed a vaccine against polio, and enacted civil rights legislation for the first time since Reconstruction.<sup>23</sup> Regarding the Soviet Union, it was safe for the American public and government to assume it had a technological advantage over the Russians.

That perception was seriously undermined on 4 October 1957, when the Soviets launched the first artificial satellite into orbit, Sputnik. Sputnik caused “a sudden crisis of confidence in American technology, values, politics, and the military.”<sup>24</sup> Americans assumed the link between space travel capabilities and security; the side which mastered space flight first would have the upper hand in delivering lethal weapons to enemy targets and in this race, the U.S. had lost the first leg. Sputnik created a perception of American political weakness, complacency, and the idea of a “missile gap,” which would become a Cold War buzzword for comparison.<sup>25</sup> Sputnik, perhaps more than any other event of the Cold War, became the catalyst for Soviet-American competition. It spurred the United States to place high priority on scientific development and research, pumping massive amounts of money and human energy into closing the perceived technological gap or create a situation of advantage to use our desired superiority as a diplomatic tool. Sputnik touched even those Americans well removed from technology industries by changing the way they viewed their values of conspicuous consumption. Many believed the nation was wasting its talents on the frivolities of consumer goods and image, and that

<sup>23</sup> Paul Dickson, *Sputnik: The Shock of the Century* (New York: Walker, 2001), 3-4.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

Americans had best focus on the global competition with the Soviets rather than on keeping up with the Joneses in our subdivisions.<sup>26</sup>

This by-product of the sporting republic—competition in any arena—would play out in any Cold War sporting event between the superpowers, and the 1960 Games were only the second Winter Olympics for the Soviet Union. This research will explore the prevailing current of U.S. journalism around the Squaw Valley 1960 Winter Games, its attitude toward the Eastern-bloc “other,” and the narratives that mass publication magazines and newspapers promoted to the American public. It will also examine official government documents to compare these narratives to how U.S. officials viewed the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union, to be sure, used sport as the West did, with even greater emphasis on its potential for utilitarian purposes. As an assembly of sixteen ethnically, religiously, and culturally diverse peoples, many of them illiterate, the USSR employed sport as a means of promoting health, hygiene, defense, labor productivity, and ethnic integration for nation building.<sup>27</sup> Thus sport in Russia “had the quite revolutionary role of being an agent of social change, with the state as pilot.”<sup>28</sup> Sport as an agent for social change was not unique—the American sporting republic was founded on a similar premise—but U.S. sport was run under the auspices of bodies like the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), “the most important national sporting organization of the period.”<sup>29</sup> In contrast, Soviet sport was directed by the state to a far greater degree.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>27</sup> Jim Riordan, “The Impact of Communism on Sport,” in *The International Politics of Sport in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, eds. Jim Riordan and Arnd Kruger (London: E&FN Spon, 1999), 49.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Dyreson, 21.



The official American stance toward and public perception of the Soviet position are also important to examine with regard to the strict foreign relations issues between the powers. As early as 1956, the U.S. was exploring the possibility of expanding its admissions policy for members of the Soviet Bloc seeking travel in the states, and even initiating an exchange program for large numbers of students. This seems to mark the beginning of rather friendly relations between the two, but even this gesture was couched, at least privately, in terms of competition. Admitting larger numbers of Soviet Bloc nationals “would tend to maintain the reputation of the U.S as a mature leader and as a believer in freedom,”<sup>30</sup> countering Communist propaganda. The State Department and the Soviet leadership, diplomatically, stated that each side had much to learn from the other, but each assumed that he had more to gain from the relationship to gain a competitive advantage.

Although the Soviet Union was generally receptive to the proposed exchanges, their intervention in the Hungarian revolution brought these initiatives to an early end. Still, relations did not collapse. Instead, as the 1950s progressed, a similar sort of measured conciliation continued, where the outward effort was toward harmony, but certain actions placed that harmony in jeopardy. By early 1958 the American government was aware of public Soviet displays of goodwill. In January of that year, Soviet leadership announced a 300,000 man reduction in armed forces, as “part of developing campaign to demonstrate Soviet desires for relaxation of tensions and to encourage Western tendencies toward slowing down military preparations and toward new negotiations with USSR.”<sup>31</sup> This was well-intentioned, but the Americans recognized that the announcements were also an attempt to encourage a reduction in

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<sup>30</sup> Statement of Policy on Admission to the U.S. of Certain European Non-Official Temporary Visitors Excludable Under Existing Law, March 26, 1955, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter FRUS), 1955-1957 XXIV: 202.

<sup>31</sup> Telegram from the Department of State to the Mission to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and European Regional Organizations, January 9, 1958, FRUS, 1958-1960 X: 146.

kind, so that the U.S. would not maximize its technological advantage but maintain balance with the Soviet Union. Additionally, many U.S. officials doubted that this reduction was a true net reduction in force, as advances in technology could allow for a human reduction, while actually maintaining military strength.<sup>32</sup> When Nikita Khrushchev assumed the Premiership around the time of the manpower reduction announcement, he concentrated power over the Communist party and the Soviet government in one seat for the first time since Stalin's death, further raising concerns in Washington about the Soviets' underlying motives. Moreover, goodwill gestures did not mean the end of Cold War espionage, and American suspicions of Soviet intentions led to numerous violations of Soviet airspace in the late 1950s, with the Soviets calling for their end, and the U.S. publicly decrying them too. Their continued occurrence, however, especially the initiation of the U2 program which would takeover headlines shortly after Squaw Valley, points to a less than harmonious attitude on the part of the Americans.

The official Soviet attitude toward sport and to the United States during the period leading to the Squaw Valley Winter Games lends credence to the possibility that the athletes may have been the mouthpieces for national policy, regardless of the official nature of that position. Their interaction with American journalism confirms as much. In 1958 the Soviet national hockey team toured the U.S. in advance of the Olympics. Despite unfortunate travel circumstances, which brought the Soviets to New York two days later than planned, and with less practice and assimilation time than hoped for, the players and their coach, Anatoly Tarasov were profusely respectful and complementary of their hosts. Tarasov expressed that they did not want to delay the game, for fear of disappointing the ticket holders. He also said that "Except for

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 147.

the lack of practice ice we have been treated with great hospitality.”<sup>33</sup> But most to the point when we consider the Soviet diplomatic efforts, Tarasov went so far as to state, “The outcome of the game is secondary to our primary purpose here, which is to promote more friendly relations with the United States.”<sup>34</sup> In the context of the Cold War, and the importance placed on clashes between the powers, these statements are noteworthy for their complete denial of the desire to win the game. They do, however, state the national effort at friendship with the United States.

During the Games and after, these sentiments continued. The anecdote which opens this article is one; the captain of the Soviet ice hockey team inexplicably (or not) gave a tip to the Americans to spur them on to a gold medal victory, but the rules of the Olympic hockey tournament in 1960 was structured such that the final game was not a true gold medal game. If Czechoslovakia had beaten the U.S., the Czechs would not have won the gold, but they would have finished ahead of the U.S.S.R. in the final standings. This fact, which the Americans recognized, is probably what encouraged Nikolai Sologubov to aid the Americans more than anything. Still, the Associated Press wire photo of Sologubov in the center of, and intertwining arms with U.S. coach Jack Riley and American players is telling.<sup>35</sup> His ear-to-ear smile is, however, not *Russian* at all in the earlier sense of that archetype.

The American press did not fail to recognize such displays. *Sports Illustrated*'s Roy Terrell, especially drawn to Soviet speed skating champion Evgeni Grishin summarized the events in a post-Games article: “[The Soviets] have become more human.... Suddenly, at Squaw Valley, the Russians ceased to be muscles without minds or personalities and became

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<sup>33</sup> William R. Conklin, “Soviet Players Here for Tour,” *New York Times*, December 31, 1958.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Gladwin Hill, “Russian Tip Helps U.S. Win Olympic Hockey,” *New York Times*, February 29, 1960.

individuals.”<sup>36</sup> Though Terrell admitted this, in a recurring theme of U.S. journalism, he would also get his digs at the Soviet’s system. Predictably, he asserts that “the story behind Russia’s vast success...was...a massive sports program enveloping schools and clubs and labor unions and the military service, state encouragement, and frequent outright aid to the specially talented,” as well as the stereotypical belief that the Russian athletes desire victory less for themselves than for Mother Russia.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, International Olympic Committee president Avery Brundage, also an American, voiced this belief as well, that “the principle, the idea, is simply this: that sport...has definite moral virtue,” and that the Soviets recognize that.<sup>38</sup> Yet, Terrell and other members of the press were taken by Grishin, perhaps for such quips as, “Do I like Americans? Of Course. They are just like us.” Grishin would go on to describe his love for automobiles as his “sickness. I am crazy about them....I would like to race a Ford. In my dreams I race Fords, but they always beat me. I do not have enough cylinders.”<sup>39</sup> The American journalist’s dream: a world-class product of the Soviet athletic machinery acknowledging American supremacy in at least one industry!

American journalism also noticed the new Soviet woman, but this recognition tacitly proved the existence of a previous stereotype much like that of the stoic, serious, never-smiling Soviet man. The most visible case of this paradigm shift was in coverage of the women’s cross-country ski event. In a fashion characteristic of the American attitude toward Eastern European women, Terrell (again) wrote, “Maria Guskova of Russia, an amazingly attractive girl...after hastily applying lipstick, proceeded to charm several hundred members of a curious and

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<sup>36</sup> Roy Terrell, “The Games Were the Best,” *Sports Illustrated*, March 7, 1960.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Creamer, “Of Greeks—and Russians,” *Sports Illustrated*, February 6, 1956.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

unbelieving press.”<sup>40</sup> The press certainly was not shocked at her victory, for she was predicted to win before the Games opened.<sup>41</sup> It is a wonder then, why they were so alarmed. Likely because she was a Soviet woman who was beautiful, and applied lipstick before facing the press. Little doubt exists that their reaction would have been different if dealing with an American female athlete.

In fact, when it comes to depictions of American women, beauty was much more likely to be the topic of conversation, especially if she happened to be successful in competition. Such is the case of American figure skater and gold medalist Carol Heiss, who was described as “20-year old Carol Heiss, a pert and lovely girl from Ozone, N.Y., thrilled the crowd with a breathtaking set of free figures.”<sup>42</sup> This description, representative of the journalism covering the ladies figure skating competition, is from what should be the most objective, bland description of the Games’ events, the official Final Report of the VIII Olympic Winter Games, 1960! These descriptions magnify Heiss’ virginal purity and beauty—she won, it seems, because of these traits, not because she was a superior athlete.

Women of the Western camp received similar coverage to that of Heiss. Here they are juxtaposed against another attractive Russian, speed skater Lydia Skoblikova, who had “deep dimples in her cheeks...blue eyes and blond hair—which, however, is much shorter and curlier than [American skier] Penny [Pitou’s]. In her tight racing costume, she appears very trim.”<sup>43</sup> The “however” which sets off her comparison to Pitou makes it as if her shorter, curlier hair keeps her from being as beautiful as Pitou. In this case, however, the descriptions of women are better

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<sup>40</sup> Roy Terrell, “The Heroes of Squaw Valley,” *Sports Illustrated*, February 29, 1960.

<sup>41</sup> “All Set for the Games!” *Sports Illustrated*, February 15, 1960.

<sup>42</sup> Official Olympic Report

<sup>43</sup> Terrell, “Games Were the Best.”

described as general objectifications of women rather than efforts to magnify East-West differences. The article goes on to describe, again, Heiss' "beauty and brilliance,"<sup>44</sup> and also the Canadian slalom champion, Anne Heggtveit, "a slender blonde from Ottawa."<sup>45</sup> Even when asked about the technical aspects of her Olympic preparations she was subjected to a physical description, "'was late getting to my peak,' she explained, *with her nice smile*"<sup>46</sup> (emphasis mine). This illustrates a type of treatment virtually never given to male athletes when describing their events.

In male competition, the press trained its focus more strictly on the playing field—or in the case of ice hockey, on the ice rink. Nevertheless, media descriptions conveyed Cold War narratives and depictions of the Soviet "other" to the reading public. In hockey, notable for its propensity for collective behavior as a team sport, the Soviet team took on the characteristics typically associated with Soviet individuals. Accounts of their style invariably tend toward their "precise teamwork,"<sup>47</sup> again from the Final Report of the Games, put out by the American organizing group for Squaw Valley. The Russian team is depicted a hockey behemoth, seeming "even stronger than it was at Cortina (1956 Winter Games), where it won all seven of its games, scoring 40 goals and conceding only nine."<sup>48</sup> The 1960 version, of course, "skates fast and well and passes with notable precision." Hockey became the perfect venue for extending the machine-like Cold War stereotype for the Soviet Union. Significantly, the U.S. government recognized that in industry and technology, too, the Soviets had become stronger since 1956.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Official Olympic Report

<sup>48</sup> "Ice Hockey," *Sports Illustrated*, February 15, 1960.

<sup>49</sup> N.F. Twinning to President Dwight D. Eisenhower, July 5, 1956, FRUS, 1955-1957 XXIV: 248.

Americans could further undermine Russian hockey supremacy in particular and ideology in general, through discussions of the Olympics' primary ideals, internationalism and amateurism. While the American press' treatment of the athletes was becoming more balanced around the Squaw Valley Games, debates about amateurism on opposite sides of the Iron Curtain became more contentious. Gladwin Hill decried the perceived decay of Olympic virtue in *The New York Times*, especially taking the Soviets to task for their sporting system. When he criticized "The 'unofficial' nation-by-nation point-scoring" that had eclipsed "personal exploits,"<sup>50</sup> it is doubtful he had Italy and her one bronze medal in mind. The medal count Hill referred to was a misappropriation of the "internationalist" ideal—internationalism was an Olympic pillar for the Baron de Coubertin not so that nations could establish rivalries and prove what *nation* was best, but for the triumph of the *individual* on the world stage. Internationalism meant only that all were welcome in the Olympic Movement, not that the Games were a competition between national contingents. While Hill may have had the relatively successful American team in mind, he most certainly placed the Soviet Union first, for its world-leading medal count in the first two Winter Games in which it participated. Fittingly, Hill cited the brochures that Russian athletes distributed at the Games which stated "that athletic achievements were 'rare' in Czarist Russia, while 'Soviet power has helped the people to unfold their talents in every field of human activity, sports including [sic].'"<sup>51</sup> To Hill this was clearly an affront to the Olympic ideal of internationalism, in the sense that it had meant the acceptance of all creeds and ideologies, with no meddling or propaganda. Hill also attacked the Soviet notion of amateurism as fraudulent, complaining that "In the official Olympic biographies, an occasional Russian is cryptically listed as a "worker" or an "employee"[sic]. But for many others the sole pursuit given is

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<sup>50</sup> Gladwin Hill, "The Haunted Valley: A Suggestion That Olympic Ideals Have Become Wandering Specters," *New York Times*, February 27, 1960.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

“member of the National Hockey Team.”<sup>52</sup> This is the way the American public could infer something of the Soviet “other” and his ideology.

That narrative contrasts with that provided for consumption of the American hockey team, our societal representative in miniature. The coverage of the hockey tournament at the Games was relatively objective. Little direct comparison exists between the two teams—usually they are described separately and of their own merit. Any real value judgments then, must be inferred. That judgment was implied when William Leggett summed up the hockey tournament for *Sports Illustrated*, stating that the Soviets and Canadians had come in as the favorites, but few paid attention to a third team, the United States, “Our Never-Say-Die Hockeymen,” to borrow his headline.<sup>53</sup> This team “included a soldier, a fireman, a couple of carpenters, two insurance peddlers and a television advertising salesman.”<sup>54</sup> While their humble day jobs are of some significance to playing the squad as an underdog for journalism’s sake, the reader will invariably draw a comparison to the Soviets and their quasi-professional hockey team. As usual, the author goes on to say that the Americans seemed no match for “Russia, with its marvelous pattern passing and tight defense,”<sup>55</sup> both of which are part of their “otherness” as the serious, precise machine with great structure.

The American public could infer a few things about its own athletes and those of the Eastern Bloc from journalism around the 1960 Olympic Winter Games at Squaw Valley. First, from Soviet athletes stating that their goals here were to promote better relations with the U.S., and Soviet athletes giving Americans a competitive advantage, and endearing individuals like

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> William Leggett, “Our Never-Say-Die Hockeymen,” *Sports Illustrated*, March 7, 1960.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.



speed skaters Evgeni Grishin and Lydia Skoblikova, the American reading public could feel the change that had occurred on the individual and collective level between 1956 and 1960, which Roy Terrell had hinted at.

Secondly, that recognition of a “new” Soviet did not mark a brand-new relationship between the two powers. In other words, Cold War rivalry continued. The climate for competition was too great, as indicated by something seemingly trivial like the “kitchen debates.” Appropriately, the Soviets were forced to balance a fine line in their statements after the Games closed. As has been established, they were at the time seeking to improve relations with the U.S., but they were also bitterly disappointed, especially by their hockey team’s performance. They were probably the nation which used sport as a national identity more than any other, America included. This showed in reports that reached the American press from the Soviet Union, praising the United States for the Games’ hospitable atmosphere: “The only sour note came in discussing the Soviet Union’s disappointing hockey team, which lost to the United States and Canada and finished third.”<sup>56</sup> The Soviet official quoted in the article said, “Our hockey team lacked in technique and it will have to do a lot of work when it returns home...although superior in play often proved unable to wind up attacks successfully.”<sup>57</sup> Failure was hard to swallow for a nation whose national identity was so inextricably linked to athletic success, but the Soviets were apparently obligated by their U.S. policy to be complimentary of their hosts. Another such article, by one of Russia’s most popular writers, lauded American sportsmanship. He wrote in the Communist newspaper Pravda, “Never has this part of the earth

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<sup>56</sup> “Soviet Hails Olympics,” *New York times*, March 2, 1960.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

been so excitingly beautiful as now," because of the "wonderfully sunny atmosphere of friendship which seems more pure than mountain air."<sup>58</sup>

More important than the Russian's effusive words for American sportsmanship, however, was his puzzlement "'over terrible roars from throngs of spectators' when a contestant, no matter what nation he came from, happened to beat a Russian."<sup>59</sup> One can imagine the joy in the partisan American crowd when a Soviet came down the mountain behind even an Austrian, or crossed the speed skating finish line after a Canadian, and especially when he fell short to the American hockey team. The Soviet Union was at this time making a concerted effort at conciliation, and the Americans generally reciprocated that sentiment, but all diplomatic posturing aside, Americans wanted Soviets to lose. In anything—athletics, industry, aerospace technology, The Cold War.

The relative lack of politicization surrounding the 1960 Squaw Valley Olympics is not surprising given the political climate leading to their open. Any matchup of Communism versus capitalism during the Cold War was sure to stir emotion in contestants and onlookers alike, but the Soviet Union's efforts at mitigating tensions from 1956 or 1957 onward, and the United States' reciprocal behavior in kind, greatly decreased the temptation for the media and public to sensationalize these matchups at the Games. The media did indeed draw attention to ideological differences between the powers, but often implicitly, while the athletes on each side of the Curtain viewed their ideological and athletic opponents more as the latter, creating an environment closer to friendly competition than political and military rivalry. Despite the increasing license taken on definitions of amateurism at the time, the 1960 Games may actually

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<sup>58</sup> "U.S. Sportsmanship Lauded," *New York Times*, March 1, 1960.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

have been closer to the ancient ideal than contemporary purists assumed. The attitude that the athletes had toward one another was much different than what the press tacitly showed. It remains difficult to place the Soviet hockey captain's actions—aiding his Cold War foe—anywhere but in the realm of athletic competition. A different Cold War climate may have made such a gesture impossible, but the late 1950s Soviet attitude allowed for it. Still, his considerations likely fell harder on athletic competition than on foreign relations matters. Because the United States defeated Czechoslovakia, the Soviets earned a medal. Had the Czechs won, Sologubov would have returned home empty-handed. As we have seen, though, his team's disappointing bronze medal may have meant everything for national concerns, versus no medal at all.

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