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Before The World Was Quiet: Ronald Reagan, Cold War Foreign Policy, And The 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Summer Games

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Graduate Program in Kinesiology
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy
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Before The World Was Quiet: Ronald Reagan, Cold War Foreign Policy, And The 1984
Los Angeles Olympic Summer Games

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Brad Joseph Congelio

Graduate Program in Kinesiology

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
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Abstract and Keywords

Upon becoming President of the United States in 1981, Ronald Reagan faced a rapidly deteriorating relationship with the Soviet Union in the midst of the ongoing Cold War, exacerbated by the events of the 1980s, including the 1980 Olympic boycott and President Jimmy Carter's administration. President Reagan's bellicose statements and staunch anti-communism stance further aggravated the situation, reasserting and deepening Cold War anxieties in the Soviet Union. Compared to his predecessors, Reagan was a war hawk determined to bring an absolute end to the Soviet Union and the socialist world. This was no more apparent than in his foreign policy towards the Soviet Union during his first four years in office when he initiated his desire for the strategic defense initiative, his massive American military buildup, and his decision to invade the Caribbean island of Grenada to stave off Soviet influence in the Third World. Each and every action taken by President Reagan was constructed in order to bring the Soviet Union to its knees via political and economic pressure. However, Reagan seemingly had a sudden change of stance when Los Angeles hosted the 1984 Olympic Summer Games. The Kremlin, in turn for Soviet Bloc attendance at the Olympics, requested several demands that had to be met – for example, the right for Soviet Aeroflot flights to land at Los Angeles International Airport and an unprecedented amount of security to protect Soviet athletes and interest. Reagan's decisions concerning the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Summer Games were a glaring anomaly when compared to the previous three years of Reagan's harsh anti-communism and "hawkish" actions and opinion regarding the Soviet Union. Drawing from declassified documents from the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, this research examines how and why the Olympic Movement was able to transcend Cold War politics in regards to President Reagan meeting each and every one of the Soviet demands despite numerous outside pressures and occurrences making it increasingly difficult for him to do so.

Keywords: President Ronald Reagan, 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games, Cold War

Acknowledgements

The writing of this dissertation has certainly not been an individual process. A great number of people from Western and beyond have played significant roles in its creation. First and foremost, a hearty thanks goes to my advisor Dr. Robert K. Barney. Over the last four years, you've enjoyed mentioning to other students and faculty that – despite your long history of teaching at Western – I was the first “Yankee” to study under your guidance. No matter the side of the border from which I arrived, it was a tremendous privilege to be one of your students. More so than any other academic, you have influenced my research, writing, and general outlook. Your patience and advice as I traversed several potential dissertation topics was nothing short of Saint-like. If I end up being half as good an educator, writer, and mentor as you, I will have done pretty well for myself.

This research would not have been possible if not for the outstanding holdings at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Museum and Library. I would like to thank the entire staff of the Library for their knowledge and work. Further, a special thank you to Jennifer Mandel. Her knowledge pertaining to my requests made both of my trips to the Library incredibly fruitful and manageable. As well, the funding received from the International Society of Olympic Historians made my research trips possible. I would like to thank the committee members for the organization's Ian Buchanan Memorial Scholarship – specifically Anthony Bijkerk for answering my numerous questions – for seeing the validity in my research topic and awarding me the funds to make it possible.

I would also like to thank those faculty members that provided advice and comments on this research during the various stages of writing and examinations: Dr. Kevin Wamsley, Dr. Michael Heine, Dr. Laura Misener, Dr. Donald Abelson, and Dr. Darwin Semotiuk. A special thank you to Dr. Larry Gerlach for agreeing to be the external examiner and traveling from the University of Utah to do so. As well, Dr. Rusty Wilson provided significant advice on how to negotiate my ongoing battle with the Freedom of Information Act process.

My friends made the process of research and writing bearable by making sure I left the house for a drink, dinner, or backyard fire. Special acknowledgements must be extended to Andrew Gillen, Becca Donnelly, Mac Ross and wife Lyndsay, Renee Mahoney, Jason Gould, Josh Archer, and Sophy Chan. And, despite being home in the States, thanks to Jamie Shoemaker for lively discussions during our spirited, trash-talk filled online games of baseball. Though graduating shortly after my arrival in Canada, I can never repay both Dr. Toby Rider (including Shannon – his much better half) and Dr. Terry Gitersos for their ongoing friendship, advice, and general helpfulness. Both have influenced my writing, research ability, and outlook second to only Dr. Barney. Beers are on me, Toby and Terry – always.

None of this would have been possible if not for my loving mother forcing me out the door every morning during high school. As well, my father's inspiring work ethic remains an exemplary model that I continuously strive to achieve. I also need to thank my other set of parents – Michael and Marian Omlor. I apologize not for marrying your daughter – but for marrying your daughter *then* moving her to a foreign country for the

proceeding four years. The love and encouragement from all four of you helped sustain both of us during the last four years.

And, finally, this dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Meredith Congelio. None of this would have been possible if not for her constant support, advice, comfort, and love. It is unfortunate that my name is the only listed author because, just as much as I am, this dissertation is hers.

Chapter 1 – Prelude

“Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn’t pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same.”¹

1.1 Introduction

In the early morning of 20 January 1989, United States President Ronald Reagan stood in the Oval Office one final time as the highest elected American official. He would soon be escorted down Pennsylvania Avenue to the inauguration ceremonies for President-elect George H.W. Bush. Before Reagan exited his office, National Security Advisor Colin Powell entered to provide Reagan with his last national security briefing. After years of teetering on the verge of nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union, Powell informed Reagan: “Mr. President, the world is quiet today.” With that, Reagan departed the Oval Office.²

The Cold War Reagan consigned to Bush was immensely different from the conflict Reagan inherited from President Jimmy Carter. Upon his arrival in the White House, Reagan brought with him a reputation of being a “hawk on national defense” and being the main protagonist for enacting “openly confrontational policies towards the

¹ An excerpt from a 30 March 1961 Reagan speech to the annual meeting of the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce. Tom Freiling, *Reagan’s God and Country: A President’s Moral Compass*, (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 2003), 56.

² Ronald Reagan, *An American Life: The Autobiography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 722.

Soviet Union.”³ These policies were aimed at achieving one goal: completely reversing the course of the Cold War. In only his first three years of office, President Reagan approved a substantial military buildup aimed at driving the Soviet Union into bankruptcy, several overt military operations ordered to stem the tide of communism spreading into the still free world, a significant campaign to limit Soviet access to Western technology, and two detailed national-security directives written to directly challenge the Soviet Union. Reagan’s approach to the Soviet Union stood in stark contrast to his immediate predecessors. While they sought to simply operate in a peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union, Reagan desired to bring the Soviet Union to its knees and bring an end to what he considered nothing more than a pre-ordained failed social experiment.

Before Reagan’s election as President, the American approach towards the Soviet Union had been that of détente and containment.⁴ Reagan believed that détente, a term integrated into the American political lexicon after the thirteen days that defined the Cuban Missile Crisis, was a “one-way street that the Soviet Union used to pursue its own aims.”⁵ Opponents from both sides of the American political spectrum argued that détente provided only a sense of legitimacy to both the Soviet Union and the socialist

³ Jim Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 39.

⁴ At their core, détente and containment were a defensive strategy aiming to prevent the expansion of Soviet influence outside of its satellite states while waiting for a gradual mellowing in relations. For more, see Mark Lagon, *The Reagan Doctrine: Sources of American Conduct in the Cold War’s Last Chapter* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1994).

⁵ Quoted in Francis Marlo, *Planning Reagan’s War: Conservative Strategists and America’s Cold War Victory* (Dulles, Virginia: Potomac Books, 2012), 13.

order. While Carter focused on the “immorality” of détente, Reagan, on the other hand, argued that the feebleness of détente underscored an acknowledgment of American weakness.⁶ Further, Reagan felt containment, a strategy developed under President Harry Truman’s tenure, was failing.⁷ Reagan’s beliefs were not unsubstantiated. Of utmost concern were the Soviet advances into the Third World, particularly Central America and Africa. The eruption of the Carnation Revolution in April of 1974 provided the Soviet Union an opportunity to spread communist ideology to Africa.⁸ For example, in the battle for political control of Angola, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola – a declared Marxism-Leninism faction – received support from both the Soviet Union and Cuba. The capture of Angola to Marxism-Leninism rule supported Reagan’s conviction that containment was no longer stemming the growing sphere of communist influence. To Reagan’s dismay, Angola was not the only African country to fall prey to the communist threat; Nigeria, Ethiopia, Senegal, Cameroon, and Mozambique were all

⁶ Jussi M. Hanhimaki, *The Rise and Fall of Détente: American Foreign Policy and the Transformation of the Cold War* (Dulles, Virginia: Potomac Books, 2013), 149.

⁷ Strikingly familiar to the ‘Reagan Doctrine,’ the ‘Truman Doctrine’ was birthed in March of 1947. Truman made it robustly clear to world leaders that the American government would provide both financial and military aid to Greece and Turkey to prevent their falling into the Soviet sphere. Truman’s philosophy ultimately derived itself from the famed “Long Telegram” as authored by George F. Kennan in 1946. Kennan vehemently argued that the Soviets would only respond to use of force; thus, the optimal way to combat communism was through slowing its geographical expansion. For a thoroughly detailed account see Arnold Offner, *Another Such Victory: President Truman and the Cold War, 1945-1953* (Palo Alto, California: Stanford University Press, 2002) and Greg Behrman, *The Most Noble Adventure: The Marshall Plan and How America Helped Rebuild Europe* (New York: Free Press, 2008).

⁸ There is substantial literature on the Angola situation of 1974-1976. Many of these histories contain the history of those last Portugal colonies in Africa that also took part in the revolution. See for instance Arthur Jay Klinghoffer, *The Angolan War: A Study in Soviet Policy in the Third World* (New York: Westview, 1980); Rene Lemarchand, ed., *American Policy in South Africa: The Stakes and the Stance*, 2d ed. (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1981), 63-143; Suzanne Jolicoeur Katsika, *The Arc of Socialist Revolution: Angola to Afghanistan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1982), 55-84.

within the Soviet orbit by the 1970s and 1980s.⁹ Moreover, the Soviet's 1979 Christmas Eve invasion of Afghanistan was another damaging blow to the concept of containment. The spirit of détente also dissolved with the invasion.

In the public realm, Reagan was the definition of an oratorical “freedom fighter.” Even on the campaign trail during his failed 1976 bid for the presidency, Reagan was harsh on the Soviets.¹⁰ In a 31 March 1976 nationwide campaign speech, Reagan implored Americans to ask the citizens “of Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, and all the others” what it was like to live in a world “where the Soviet Union is number one.” Reagan insisted that he did not want to live in a world like that and he was not ready to “consign” every state of the Union “to the dustbin of history.”¹¹ Reagan's anti-communist rhetoric continued unceasingly through his 1980 election as President.

Indeed, Reagan's Soviet discourse frightened Soviet leadership. Reagan's declamatory approach to the Soviet Union was derivative of his first National Security Planning Group.¹² The consortium intended to begin a “concerted effort to play on the

⁹ For a detailed account of the Soviet Union's foray into Africa see Vladimir Shubin, *The Hot 'Cold War': The USSR in Southern Africa* (London: Pluto Press, 2008).

¹⁰ Generally, the term “soviet” is defined as the organizations during the Russian Revolution that guarded against counter-revolution until an election of a constituent assembly could take place. In the text of this research – in line with broader and popular Cold War history – the term “Soviets” will be used as a connotation to describe the Soviet government or the Soviet leadership as a whole.

¹¹ David W. Houch and Amos Kiewe, *Actor, Ideologue, Politician: The Public Speeches of Ronald Reagan* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993), 157.

¹² Hereafter NSPG.

Soviet psychological vulnerabilities and weakness.”¹³ As further explained by Richard Allen, one of Reagan’s national security advisors, the Kremlin¹⁴ “thought they had some first-class nut-ball on their hands.”¹⁵ The general thinking among Reagan’s administration was that the Soviets did not desire to play a game of “nuclear chicken with a madman.”¹⁶ Early in Reagan’s first term, KGB Chief Yuri Andropov worried that the “new administration” was attempting to “push the whole development of international relations on to a dangerous path.”¹⁷

Reagan’s vitriolic lambasting continued. On 17 May 1981, Reagan provided the first public hint of his strategy towards the Soviet Union during a speech at Notre Dame University. “The West,” he said, “won’t contain communism, it will transcend communism. It will dismiss it as some bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages

¹³ Peter Schweizer, *Victory: The Reagan Administration’s Secret Strategy That Hastened The Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1994), 8.

¹⁴ The word “Kremlin” can be argued as being quite ambiguous. In its most literal sense, a kremlin (lowercase) is a significant fortress complex in historic Russian cities. Throughout this research, the word “Kremlin” is used as a synecdoche to refer to the Moscow Kremlin as the government of the Russian Federation much like how the term “White House” is often used to refer to the American government. Doing so is standard practice in the writing of both Sovietology and Kremlinology and in general Cold War history. For examples, please see Benjamin Lambeth and Kevin Lewis, “The Kremlin and SDI,” *Foreign Affairs* (66), no. 4 (Spring, 1988), 755-770; David Holloway, “The View from the Kremlin,” *The Wilson Quarterly* (7), no. 5 (Winter, 1983), 102-111; Ian Bremmer, “Who’s in Charge in the Kremlin,” *World Policy Journal* (22), no. 4 (Winter, 2005/2006), 1-6; Paul Klebniov, *Godfather of the Kremlin: The Decline of Russia in the Age of Gangster Capitalism* (New York: Harcourt Books), 2000; Gregory Mitrovich, *Undermining The Kremlin: America’s Strategy to Subvert The Soviet Bloc, 1947-1956* (Cornell, New York: Cornell University Press, 2000); Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 1997.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Hanhimaki, 141-42.

are even now being written.”¹⁸ In a speech in front of the British House of Commons on 8 June 1982, Reagan stated his certainty that “... freedom and democracy will leave Marxism and Leninism on the ash heap of history.”¹⁹ However, Reagan’s most pointed verbal attack on the Soviet Union occurred on 8 March 1983. In a speech to the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida, Reagan lectured:

They preach the supremacy of the state, declare its omnipotence over individual man and predict its eventual domination of all peoples on Earth. They are the focus of evil in the modern world. So, in your discussion of the nuclear freeze proposals, I urge you to beware the temptation of pride, the temptation of blithely declaring yourselves about it all and label both sides equally at fault, to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an *evil empire*, to simply call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil.²⁰

Despite the harsh words, the leaders of both the United States and the Soviet Union realized that acting upon them would lead to a nuclear confrontation and, thus, likely the end of the world. Many American Presidents prior to Reagan struggled with the concept of fighting a conceptual war without troops, infantry, planes, or ships. Notwithstanding the best wishes of the International Olympic Committee, Cold War politics was a long-entrenched feature of international competition upon Reagan’s election as president. As

¹⁸ Paul Kengor, *The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of Communism* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2007), 77.

¹⁹ Tony Smith, *America’s Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 293.

²⁰ Howard Jones, *Crucible of Power: A History of U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1897* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 486. Italics mine.

aptly phrased by historian Kenneth Osgood, the Cold War thus became an ideological struggle for the “hearts and minds of the world.”²¹ With either side wishing to avoid armed conflict, the battle to prove the supreme ideology moved in part to the athletic field – specifically the Olympic Games, no doubt due to its global scale and social reach.

In Carter’s case, the 1980 American-led boycott of the Moscow Olympics was an overt use of the Olympic Games to declare discontent over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan – the first time since the end of World War II that the Soviet Union occupied territory not already under its control. Conversely, Reagan’s use of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Summer Games stood in vivid contrast to the President’s desire to bring an end to the Soviet Union and the socialist world.

1.2 Statement of Purpose

This research examines how and why the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Summer Games became a noticeable exception to President Ronald Reagan’s foreign policy towards the Soviet Union and communism. That is, Reagan’s decision to concede to all Soviet demands in turn for Soviet Bloc attendance at the Los Angeles Olympics was in direct contrast to his long-held and firmly entrenched anti-communism and “hawkish” beliefs as evidenced by his desire to construct the strategic defense initiative, his peace through strength program, his anti-Soviet rhetoric, the assistance given to Third World countries to fend off the impulses of communism, and his Presidential order to invade Grenada.

²¹ Kenneth Osgood, “Hearts and Minds: The Unconventional Cold War,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 4, no. 2 (May, 2002), 85-107.

1.3 Literature Review

That the keepers of the Olympics failed to keep the movement free of political interference cannot be argued. The historiography of political intrusion of the Olympic Games is voluminous, oft entangled in multiple social, cultural, racial undertones, the origins traceable to various groups, people, and causes. For instance, the 1968 Mexico City Olympic Summer Games were marred by two enduring political statements: (1) the raised, gloved fists of Tommy Smith and John Carlos in an attempt to bring focus to the plight of African Americans in the tumultuous times of the American civil rights movement and, (2) the massacre, by members of the Mexican armed forces, of students protesting the cost of hosting the Games.²² Additionally, one interested in political statements made via the Olympic Games need look no further than the ‘Munich Massacre’ at the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich, West Germany. The Palestinian group Black September took eleven members of the Israeli Olympic team hostage and demanded the release of 234 prisoners held hostage in Israeli prisons. The end of the hostage crisis was an unthinkable tragedy; all the hostages were murdered.²³ These two examples underscore an infallible theme: the history of political interference in the Olympic Movement is vast, each topic subjecting researchers and readers to abundant rabbit holes to investigate in order to disclose the entire account both accurately and

²² For an unsurpassed account of both these incidents see, Kevin Witherspoon, *Before the Eyes of the World: Mexico and the 1968 Olympic Games* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008).

²³ For more about the hostage situation, and the response of the IOC, specifically that of President Avery Brundage, see, Allen Guttman, *The Games Must Go On: Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984). For a comprehensive work on just the hostage situation see, Aaron J. Klein, *Striking Back: The 1972 Munich Olympics Massacre and Israel’s Deadly Response* (New York: Random House, 2007).

comprehensively. To circumvent a meandering narrative, this review will maintain a focus on those instances where the Olympic Games were intertwined with American foreign policy.

The first such occurrence transpired during the lead-up to the 1936 Berlin Summer Olympics, otherwise referred to as the Nazi Olympics. The issue at hand was that of American participation. The Berlin Games, awarded to the city before Hitler's accession to supremacy, became a political ploy to display Nazi ideology. Most worrisome was the Third Reich's treatment of Jews. As noted by historian Alan Bullock, Hitler's hatred of the Jews "was perhaps the most sincere emotion of which he was capable."²⁴ By 1 April 1933 all non-Aryans employed through civil service and at universities were removed from their positions. Shortly after, the edict included the professions of law and medicine. Members of the Olympic Movement did not avoid Hitler's purge. As noted by Richard Mandell, there was "consternation" within the IOC when members learned Dr. Theodor Lewald, the Christian president of the German Olympic Committee, was among those removed from power.²⁵ It rapidly became apparent that Germany's Olympic teams would field no athletes of Jewish descent. In reaction to the *Gleichschaltung* of German sport, American sports leaders called for a boycott of the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. The boycott debate quickly descended into the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration. However, as Olympic historian Stephen Wenn noted, the White House resisted being dragged into the participation issue "despite

²⁴ Alan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* (New York: Harper Press, 1952), 420.

²⁵ Richard Mandell, *The Nazi Olympics* (Champaign: The University of Illinois Press, 1987), 61.

the personal protestations of a number of American private citizens in the latter stages of 1935 and early months of 1936.”²⁶ Indeed, the Roosevelt administration argued that the Olympic Games and all pertinent decisions were a matter best left to those private organizations that ran such events. Despite the German government’s marked propaganda purposes for hosting the Olympic festival, the State Department and Franklin Roosevelt, as Wenn stated, opted not to mix politics into the Olympic Movement.²⁷

After the Olympics departed Berlin, the German atrocities continued – leading to the second World War. The last desperate offensive measure of the German army failed in January of 1945. On 4 February 1945, the leaders of the Allied countries convened for the Yalta Conference, deciding on both the occupation of post-war Germany and the action needed in the Pacific theatre. The signing of the Japanese surrender documents aboard the USS *Missouri* on 2 September 1945 marked the end of the death and widespread destruction caused by World War II. However, it also heralded the establishment of the Cold War.

The birth of the nuclear age made a third World War unthinkable to both the White House and the Kremlin. Therefore, the two superpowers of post-World War II were forced to find other ways to prove superiority over the other. Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis stated it succinctly:

²⁶ Stephen R. Wenn, “A Policy of Neutrality: Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the Department of State on the Issue of Proposed American Participation in the Games of the XIth Olympiad – Berlin, 1936” (master’s thesis, University of Western Ontario, 1988), 110.

²⁷ Ibid, 134.

Both of the ideologies [Capitalism and Communism] that defined [these] worlds were meant to offer hope: that is why one has an ideology in the first place. One of them, however, had come to depend, for its functioning, upon the creation of fear. The other had no need to do so. Therein lay the basic ideological asymmetry of the Cold War.²⁸

Thus, to succeed as an alternative, the American ideology of capitalism had to show that communism suppressed freedom, and that only capitalism could sustain such freedom. Conversely, the Soviet Union desired to prove to its people and the rest of the free world that communism was the dominant ideology over capitalism.²⁹ Gaddis argued that both “embraced ideologies with global aspirations” and those leaders from either side concluded “what worked at home would also do so for the rest of the world.”³⁰

In lieu of a “hot war,” the Soviet Union and the United States waged an ideological battle that encompassed all parts of culture and society. The Truman and Eisenhower administrations were the first to utilize non-diplomatic entreaties. In his seminal 1997 book, Walter Hixson illustrated that “modern communications, including radio, television, and film, as well as direct contacts through exhibitions, tourism, and exchange programs, were agents of Western political infiltration.”³¹ Future administrations continued the activities. Frances Stoner Saunders outlined the Congress for Cultural Freedoms, which, from 1950 to 1967, assisted in the operations of all manner

²⁸ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 98.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 101.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

³¹ Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), xv.

of artists, writers, and academics behind the Iron Curtain. The objective, Saunders explained, “was to inoculate the world against the contagion of communism, and to ease the passage of American foreign policy interest abroad.”³²

The Cold War became what Kenneth Osgood described as a “Total War.” Further, he explained “virtually every aspect of the American way of life – from political organization and philosophical ideas, to cultural products and scientific achievements, to economic practices and social relationships – was exposed to scrutiny in this total contest for the hearts and minds of the world’s people.”³³ Sport was not overlooked as an avenue to compete with the Soviet Union and communism. As British sports historian James Riordan stated, “sport became an area of great social significance” only after “the division of much of the world into two camps in the 1950s with the nuclear stalemate and the intensifying ‘battle for men’s mind’s.’”³⁴ After the 1917 Revolution, the Soviet Union ignored “bourgeois” sport – especially the Olympics Games, viewed by the Soviets as an organization designed to “deflect workers from the class struggle and to train them for new imperialist wars.”³⁵ Riordan argued that the development of the ten-state Soviet Bloc – and, thus, the change of the balance of power in the world – warmed

³² Frances Stoner Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper? The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (Great Britain: Granta Books, 1999), 2-5.

³³ Kenneth Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower’s Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2006), 3.

³⁴ James Riordan, “Soviet Sport and Soviet Foreign Policy,” in *Sport and International Relations*, ed. Benjamin Lowe, David Kanin, and Andrew Strenk (Champaign, Illinois: Stipes Publishing Company, 1978), 316.

³⁵ V.P. Kozmina, “Mezhdunarodnoye rabocheye sportivnoye dvixhenie posle Velikoi Oktyabrskoi sotsialisticheskoi revolyutsii (1917-1928),” as quoted in Jim Riordan, “Rewriting Soviet Sports History,” *Journal of Sports History* 20, no. 3 (Winter, 1993), 247-48.

the Soviets to sport as an “obvious arena for defeating one’s ideological opponent.”³⁶ The Soviet Party resolution on sport in 1949 confirmed Riordan’s claim, urging all sports committees “to spread sport to every corner of the land, raise the level of skill and, on that basis, help Soviet athletes win world supremacy in major sports in the immediate future.”³⁷ Gaddis further validated the claim, contending that by the end of 1949, the “Soviet-American contest for Europe had become a stalemate” which caused both countries to seek other exploitable opportunities.³⁸ Sport, contended Peter Beck, became a “high-profile battlefield” whereupon “superiority was not an abstraction, but a reality to be demonstrated repeatedly and conspicuously.”³⁹ This sporting reality became even more significant upon the Soviet entrance to the Olympic Movement. Several scholars have adequately covered this milestone in Soviet sport history, some of the best work done by Jennifer Parks.⁴⁰

The Soviet Union first sent athletes to the 1952 Olympics Games in Helsinki. Cold War connotations permeated the event to the tune of “counting medals.” The United States finished atop the medal standings. However, the 1956 Melbourne Games

³⁶ Riordan, “Rewriting Soviets Sports History,” 248.

³⁷ I. Novikov, “Bolshoi sport I vneshnyaya politika,” *Kultura I zhizn* (1949), 3, as quoted in Riordan, “Rewriting Soviet Sports History,” 248.

³⁸ Gaddis, 122.

³⁹ Peter Beck, “Britain and the Cold War’s ‘Cultural Olympics’: Responding to the Political Drive of Soviet Sport, 1945-58,” *Contemporary British History* 19, no. 2 (June, 2005), 170.

⁴⁰ Jennifer Parks, “Verbal Gymnastics: sports, bureaucracy, and the Soviet Union’s Entrance into the Olympic Games, 1946-1952,” in *East Plays West*, 27-44. See, too, Jennifer Parks, “Red Sport, Red Tape: The Olympic Games, The Soviet Sports Bureaucracy, and the Cold War, 1952-1980” (PhD dissertation, University of North Carolina, 2009).

marked a substantial victory for the Soviet Union. American journalists calculated the final medal count to be 722-593 in favor of the Soviet Union. The Soviets crowed that “the myth of US superiority in sports” had been “dissipated completely.”⁴¹ The Soviet Union viewed such athletic victories as a “victory for the Soviet form of society and the socialist sports system; it provides irrefutable proof of the superiority of the socialist culture over the decaying culture of the capitalist states.”⁴²

The rapid rise of Soviet success in the Olympics forced the American public into a “Cold War social anxiety.”⁴³ In doing so, the United States government created what Montex de Oca called a “muscle gap discourse” – the focus of which was to develop an American sporting philosophy that denied the Soviets “easy political victories at the Olympics.”⁴⁴ Montex de Oca contended that the American government developed a two-prong approach to closing the “muscle gap.” The first approach was compelling non-governmental organizations such as the American Olympic Committee, the Amateur Athletic Union, and the National Collegiate Athletic Association to raise funds to finance the American Olympic teams. The second approach was to design American collegiate athletic programs as a training ground for Olympic athletes.⁴⁵ This design, created to directly compete with Soviet superiority at the Olympics, signified, as Montex de Oca

⁴¹ Alfred E. Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games: A History of the Power Brokers, Events, and Controversies that Shaped the Games* (Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics, 1999), 109.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 90.

⁴³ Jeffrey Montex de Oca, “The Muscle Gap: Physical Education and US Fears of a depleted masculinity, 1954-1963,” in *East Plays West*, 123-148.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

argued, that the American government under the direction of President Dwight D. Eisenhower viewed the Olympics as a cultural arena for geopolitical struggles.⁴⁶

In the battle of ideologies, the Soviet Union clearly maintained a lead in the use of sport. The Soviet Union preserved athletic superiority through the use of state-athletes, thus spinning each victory into communist propaganda against the capitalist societies of the world. In a speech to an audience at Friendship International Airport in Baltimore, Republican Senator John Marshall Butler proclaimed:

Are we in the United States – where our record of excellence in the field of amateur sportsmanship is a byproduct of our unique system of government – allowing the Soviet Union to pollute the Olympic Games; to use, with diabolic deceit, the spirit of sportsmanship itself as a velvet-gloved iron fist to ruthlessly hammer out their Godless propaganda?⁴⁷

Butler was not alone in his assessment of the troublesome position the United States was in.⁴⁸

The first overt signs that the American Government was resisting Soviet ideological advances through sport came via the USA-USSR dual track meets of the late 1950s and 1960s. Joseph Turrini argued that these dual track meets were the “most

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Roy Clumpner, “Federal Involvement in Sport to Promote American Interest or Foreign Policy Objectives, 1950-1973,” in *East Plays West*, 402. The full and original text can be found in *U.S. Congressional Records*, Vol. 101, 94th Congress, 1st Session, 1955, 5169, 5907, 11213.

⁴⁸ For instance see John Hoberman, *Sport and Political Ideology* (Austin, Texas: The University of Texas Press, 1984), 190-91; John Washburn, “Sport as a Soviet Tool,” *Foreign Affairs* 34, no. 3 (April, 1956), 490-499.

important and visible of the Cold War sport competitions” aside from the Olympic Games.⁴⁹ Turrini asserted that while the events were “first and foremost athletic competitions,” the meets also “functioned as propaganda and foreign diplomacy tools.”⁵⁰ President Eisenhower felt that the track meets could be a “useful tool in demonstrating to the Soviet people the success of American capitalism and democracy.”⁵¹

While Eisenhower applauded the use of the track meets as overt surrogate Cold War battlefields, he also permitted the use of clandestine operations to undermine Soviet sport and, in general, communism. In his 1976 doctoral dissertation, Thomas Domer utilized Presidential Libraries, the National Archives, the Congressional Record, and the Brundage Collection to make the claim that both the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations tried to “take every opportunity short of direct and total subsidy to enhance the sports image of the United States.”⁵² Often, especially during the Eisenhower administration, private groups were intertwined with government-led initiatives, none more so psychologically damaging to the Soviet Union than the defection of Hungarian athletes after the Melbourne Olympic Games. Toby Rider discussed several such state-private networks in relation to using the Olympic Movement as a way to resist communist propaganda. For instance, the Hungarian National Sports

⁴⁹ Joseph M. Turrini, “It Was Communism Versus the Free World: The USA-USSR Dual Track Meet Series and the Development of Track and Field in the United States, 1958-1985,” *Journal of Sport History* 28, no. 3 (Fall, 2001), 428.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid, 429.

⁵² Thomas M. Domer, “Sport in Cold War America, 1953-1963: The Diplomatic and Political Use of Sport in the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations” (PhD dissertation, Marquette University, 1976), 25.

Federation⁵³ derived from the flux of Hungarian migration to America that occurred in three phases: the 45-ers, the 47-ers, and the 56-ers. Rider noted that the group maintained close affiliation to the Hungarian National Council, an outreach of the National Committee for a Free Europe, “an exile organization funded secretly by the U.S. government.”⁵⁴ The support, provided via the United States Central Intelligence Agency, provided both funding and an office space for the group. In turn, the National Committee for a Free Europe assisted in the operations of its sister groups.

In his doctoral dissertation, Rider built on the work previously completed by Domer. By using declassified sources previously unattainable to scholars such as Domer, Rider argued that the United States government responded to the “post-war challenge of Soviet sport earlier, and far more aggressively, than previously acknowledged.”⁵⁵ However, Rider asserted that the American response was not an overt overhauling of the American sporting system; rather, the U.S. government partook in “covert psychological warfare operations and overt propaganda distributed to the free world.”⁵⁶ Most pertinent to this study is Rider’s discussion of U.S. government propaganda surrounding the Olympic Games. Rider stated that “news stories, cartoons, and radio commentaries”

⁵³ Hereafter HNSF.

⁵⁴ Toby C. Rider, “The Distant Fight against Communist Sport: Refugee Sports Organizations in America and the International Olympic Committee” in *Rethinking Matters Olympic: Investigations into the Socio-Cultural Study of the Modern Olympic Movement* (Proceedings of the Tenth International Symposium for Olympic Research), eds. Robert K. Barney, Janice Forsyth, & Michael K. Heine, 2010, 121.

⁵⁵ Toby C. Rider, “The Olympic Games and the Secret Cold War: The U.S. Government and the Propaganda Campaign Against Communist Sport, 1950-1960” (PhD dissertation, The University of Western Ontario, 2011), 4.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

were disseminated through various methods behind the Iron Curtain. In an attempt to counter Soviet propaganda, the information distributed by the American government was meant to depict the American “way of life” and the “benefits and opportunities afforded by a democratic society.”⁵⁷ However, in the late 1960s, “the secret network of CIA fronts” began to be exposed by mainstream American media.⁵⁸

With the undoing of the clandestine operations, national policy toward the Olympics again turned toward broadly-based national fitness campaigns and reforms. Thomas Hunt argued that while Presidents Richard M. Nixon and Gerald R. Ford⁵⁹ focused on the reform needed among the country’s amateur sports bodies, the Johnson administration “struggled with how best to use sport as a means of influence in the cultural Cold War.”⁶⁰ Hunt attributed Johnson’s struggles to the immense size and complexity of both the American government and sport system.⁶¹ American

⁵⁷ Ibid, 7.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 379.

⁵⁹ President Ford is an underappreciated – and understudied – figure in Olympic history. After being thrust into the Presidency after the Watergate Scandal, Ford followed the lead of ousted President Nixon in desiring to recruit the best Olympians possible in an effort to win more medals than the Soviets. In June of 1975, Ford called for the creation of the *President’s Commission on Olympic Sports*. The commission determined that infighting between the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU), National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), and the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) was making the creation of the best possible Olympic teams quite the impossibility. With the assistance of Ted Stevens, the U.S. Senator from Alaska, Ford championed the *Amateur Sports Act of 1978* that provided all responsibility of the U.S. Olympic team to the newly renamed USOC. President Jimmy Carter fulfilled Ford’s wishes by signing the act into law.

⁶⁰ Thomas Hunt, “American Sport Policy and the Cultural Cold War: The Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Years,” *Journal of Sport History* 33, no. 3 (Fall, 2006), 274.

⁶¹ Ibid.

preoccupation with the enduring Vietnam War surely contributed to Johnson's lack of Olympic vision.

The focus of American sport policy again turned to reform upon the election of Nixon to America's highest office. However, the process of selecting the host site for the 1976 Olympic Summer Games thrust the Nixon administration directly into a cultural Cold War battle. Cold War historian Nicholas Evan Sarantakes noted that the Nixon White House largely ignored Los Angeles' bid for the 1976 through the first year of the process. While Nixon penned just three sentences of support of Los Angeles to the IOC, then Governor of California Ronald Reagan provided a much stronger – and lengthier – message. Los Angeles' effort would have continued being ignored, argued Sarantakes, if not for LAOOC member Rodney Rood contacting an old colleague – H.R. Haldeman, the White House Chief of Staff. Rood wrote to Haldeman upon the Soviet entry into the bidding contest, saying, “We are now in direct confrontation with the Soviet Union on the level of international politics – a confrontation to determine international public appeal under the guise of non-politics – the award of the Summer Olympic Games of 1976.”⁶² As history now notes, the award of the 1976 Olympics went to Montreal. Nixon and his staff attempted to negotiate with the IOC and international sport much as they would the United Nations. Sarantakes concluded that the Nixon administration “learned that influencing international sport was different from the political affairs of nation-states.”⁶³

⁶² Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, “Moscow versus Los Angeles: the Nixon White House wages Cold War in the Olympic selection process,” *Cold War History* 9, no. 1 (February, 2009), 139.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 151.

If Nixon attempted to use politics to influence international sport, one of his eventual successors attempted to use sport to influence international politics.

Jimmy Carter's attempt to leverage the Olympics Games in international politics failed just as miserably as Nixon's previous attempt at Olympic influence. To show displeasure over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, Carter prompted an international boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games. Sarantakes again provided an outstanding academic work on the topic and argued that the Olympics "turned out to be far more resilient than [Carter] ever imagined."⁶⁴ Carter's administration made the same fatal mistake as Nixon's administration in attempting to influence the Olympic Movement through proper political channels. Sarantakes concluded that the Carter approach was "riddled with errors" and that the "ignorance and arrogance" of the administration blinded it to the fact that national Olympic committees were "independent of their governments in many Western democracies."⁶⁵

Little has been written on the Soviet Bloc boycott of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. To date, the only significant work to use primary sources is authored by Harold Wilson, Jr. In his article, *The Golden Opportunity*, Wilson examined the Reagan administration's attempts to influence Romania to rebel against the Kremlin's call for boycott and attend the Olympics.⁶⁶ In short, Reagan informed Romanian President

⁶⁴ Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, *Dropping the Torch: Jimmy Carter, The Olympic Boycott, and the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 226.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 227.

⁶⁶ Romania was not the only country the Reagan administration was targeting. In this specific case, Romania was targeted due to Romanian President Nicolae Ceaușescu continuously "toeing the Soviet party

Nicolae Ceaușescu that the American government would provide favorable “trade clauses” to the country while renewing its “Most Favored Nation” status.⁶⁷ The tradeoff worked, as the Romanian Olympic team proudly marched into the Los Angeles Coliseum, thus continuing Romania’s reputation of being the “maverick of Eastern Europe” and securing a major Olympic coup for Reagan and his administration.

1.4 Contributions to the Body of Knowledge

The 1984 Soviet Bloc boycott of the Los Angeles Olympic Games is a woefully undeveloped area of Olympic research. There are two contributing factors for this: (1) previous scholarship simply summarizing the boycott was a retaliatory effort⁶⁸ and (2) the embargo of primary sources that would validate any counter claims. While the USSR’s reasoning for the boycott is difficult to dissect without access to the Soviet archives, a thorough exploration of American primary sources can provide a well-rounded exploration of the American governmental understanding and approach to an otherwise largely ignored part of Olympic history.

line.” The Reagan administration was also highly interested in enticing those African countries under the Soviet sphere of influence to attend the Games despite the Soviet boycott effort. For example, see Michael Deaver to Jay Moorhead, 16 May 1984, folder “Correspondence Incoming (1),” box 2, John Kenneth Hill Files, RRPL and John Crocker to Addis Ababa, Lagos, and Maputo Ambassadors, 23 May 1984, folder “African Participation,” box 1, John Kenneth Hill Files, RRPL.

⁶⁷ Harold E. Wilson, Jr., “The Golden Opportunity: Romania’s Political Manipulation of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games,” *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* 3 (1994), 90. Most Favored Nation status is the spawn of 1973’s National Security Decision Memorandum 212. The Memorandum for all intents and purposes divided the Communist world into two camps – good and bad. As Wilson explained, the goal was to reward “good” Communists economically and politically (p. 84).

⁶⁸ See for example, David Kanin, *Political History of the Olympic Games* (New York: Westview Press, 1981), 108-147.

Of those previous authors who have written on the 1984 boycott, only John Hoberman extended the investigation beyond the “retaliatory effort” stance. In *Olympic Crisis*, Hoberman argues that the Soviet Bloc withdrawal was the result of anti-communist rhetoric from Reagan, the fear of defection by star athletes, and concerns of security and American public dissent.⁶⁹ While others besides Hoberman have speculated on a more substantial narrative behind the Soviet response, no research has yet been completed to tell such a narrative.⁷⁰ That said, his work is based wholly on the use of historical newspapers accounts along with a modicum of his own impressive scholarly estimations and theories.

This study is largely in agreement with Hoberman’s arguments. That is, that Reagan’s hardline rhetoric maintained a role in the 1984 Olympics; that the United States government was fully cognizant of the defection issue; and that concerns of security by the Soviets were unwarranted while such concerns over American public dissent were likely well-deserved. Indeed, Hoberman argued that the pieces of a “much larger mosaic” need to be assembled to complete the narrative of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games boycott. This study intends to begin the process of putting the pieces of that mosaic together and further moving the Soviet boycott of the 1984 Olympics away from a mere retaliatory story. In order to make this argument, this research is the first work on the 1984 boycott to utilize the Presidential Archives of Ronald Reagan and the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee Archives.

⁶⁹ John Hoberman, *The Olympic Crisis: Sport, Politics, and the Moral Order* (New Rochelle, New York: Aristide D. Caratzas, 1986), 128.

⁷⁰ See for example Senn, *Power, Politics, and the Olympic Games*, 197.

This research contributes to the current body of knowledge in three significant ways. First, it serves to fill in a large gap in the current literature of Olympic history. No substantial archival work on the 1984 Olympic boycott has been completed. This research fills that void. Second, the research provides a substantial contribution to the area of Cold War history, specifically the sub-niche of the Reagan administration and the Cold War. Aside from Hoberman's book, no singular piece of Reagan research has explained the 1984 Olympic boycott as anything more than an afterthought. However, a significant amount of examination has been completed concerning Reagan's approach to the Soviet Union and Cold War – specifically his rapprochement beginning at the end of 1983. This research shows that the Olympics played a part in the motives, particularly Reagan's conviction of maintaining the opportunity for compromise and quiet diplomacy. The Reagan administration's handling of the 1984 Olympics exemplifies this delicate approach to US/USSR relations. Lastly, this research adds to the growing body of literature pertaining to the role of American presidential administrations in the Olympic Games, specifically from a foreign and international policy viewpoint. By studying the Reagan administration, this research is positioned as the most contemporary research thus far in the aforementioned area of presidential administrations and the Olympic Movement.

1.5 Method and Methodology

Archival resources principally underscored this research and, as such, will be presented in the form of a historical narrative. The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Archives provided the majority of the research for this project. The archives hold the

papers of Michael Deaver who served as the White House Deputy Chief of Staff from January 1981 to May 1985. More important to this study, he served as the presidential liaison for the 1984 Olympics. Additionally, the archives also house the papers of John Kenneth Hill, who served under Deaver as the Federal Security Coordinator for the 1984 Summer Olympics. Both collections are invaluable to the completion of this research. Also vital to the completion of this research are the papers of Richard Pipes, who served as the Director of East European and Soviet Affairs for the first two years of Reagan's tenure as President. Pipes' writing vividly details the state of US/USSR relations during Reagan's hardline rhetoric.

The voluminous Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee archives housed on the campus of the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) also served as a key repository for this research in that it provided a paper trail to compare to the documents found in the Reagan Archives. While the Reagan Archives adequately show the decision-making at the top level of American government, the LAOOC archives display how the organizers took the assistance of the American government and put it into action. More so than anything, the Soviets voiced displeasure over the perceived lack of security at the Los Angeles Olympics; the records of the LAOOC demonstrate that the Soviets were mistaken in their concern about the issue.

1.6 Limitations

I have not attempted to use Soviet archives in this research. However, as my focus is not on Soviet *reasoning* for the boycott, it detracts little from the overall effort. Thus, the premise of this research revolves around the Ronald Reagan administration and

its attempts to appease Soviet leaders under the guise of the White House's new foreign policy towards the Kremlin. It makes no claims or declarations about the intent of Soviet Union leadership to boycott.

As well, any research pertaining to politics should rightfully be accompanied with a declaration of the author's place in the political spectrum. This dissertation shall be no different. Being born and raised in West Virginia provided for a smorgasbord of politics education. The southern West Virginia coalfields – including such counties as McDowell, Mingo, and Logan – are largely Democratic hotbeds. The Eastern Panhandle of the state, including the Potomac Highlands, is an area of large Republican support. The Northern Panhandle of West Virginia is split between the two parties. Indeed, even West Virginia's election history is just as fragmented as its split areas of support. In the 2012 Presidential election, West Virginians provided their Electoral College points to the Republican ticket. However, the state's residents elected a Democratic governor. The House and Senate members from West Virginia are Democratic as well. My childhood household was just as equally divided. Raised in a small town in the Northern Panhandle – approximately 45-minutes away from downtown Pittsburgh – my liberal leanings remained a minority within the family. I do find myself identifying more so with the liberal agenda and the “political left” – or, in direct opposition to Reagan – but for purposes of remaining open to progressive candidates from the “political right,” I remain – and shall remain – a registered independent.

Regardless of my political inclinations, any research pertaining to the 40th President of the United States must still manage to traverse the “Reagan paradox.” A devoted New Deal Democrat until a sudden change at the age of fifty, Reagan remains

one of the most admired conservative Republicans in American history. This, despite a parade of contradictions in what he believed in and what he acted on. He detested the concept of big government; yet, he made government bigger. During the 1980 presidential election campaign, he harped on his belief of fiscal conservatism; yet, he inherited a national debt of \$80 billion and managed to increase it to \$200 billion in his eight years of office.⁷¹ The anti-abortionists revered him; yet he did little – if anything – to champion their cause. Some of his more harsh critics argued that Reagan had no right to argue for either family stability or the church as Reagan was divorced from his first wife and rarely attended service. Moreover, these same critics argued that the bitterness and estrangement Reagan created with his children was yet another contradiction to the wholesome virtues that Reagan portrayed himself to stand for. These contradictions caused Clark Clifford – a prominent Democrat lawyer who served Harry S. Truman, John D. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, and Jimmy Carter – to label Ronald Reagan as an “amicable dunce.”⁷² The context of this dissertation is largely void of any of these contradictions but, where applicable, has provided footnoted explanations on the ones that do exist. As for my own beliefs regarding Reagan, the text of this research arguably showcases my admiration for Reagan as a public speaker and for his ability to connect with his audience using homespun humor and grace – a talent he brought to the White House after a successful career in Hollywood. From a political viewpoint, I have

⁷¹ The incoming President starting spending shortly after he took the oath of office. Reagan’s 1981 inauguration activities alone cost \$16.3 million, nearly five times that of the Carter inauguration.

⁷² Lou Cannon and Carl M. Cannon, *Reagan’s Disciple: George W. Bush’s Troubled Quest for a Presidential Legacy* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008), 28.

attempted to maintain a distance between my own beliefs and leanings and Reagan's agenda as I discovered in his archives.

Lastly, any study built upon archival research is only as sound and completed as the archives it pulls from. In the case of this archival research, the majority of the material was 29 years old – or, in other words, over the mandatory 25-year holding period on presidential documents and, in some cases, just approaching the holding period on other material deemed “sensitive.” However, my research in the archives of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum discovered many files and folders regarding to the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games still classified; no researcher had yet requested them to be moved through the declassification process. As well, several Freedom of Information Act Requests through the United States Department of State remain open at the time of the defense of this dissertation. However, the requested documents are largely peripheral – documents pertaining to Romania and Africa – and detract little from my initial argument as I continue to pursue this area of research. The lack of these documents may impair the length of this research, but in no way does it harm the integrity of my argument.

1.7 Delimitations

The focus of this study is directed between the years of 1980 and 1984. The starting point of 1980 is used to coincide with Reagan's campaign for the presidency. It also marks the start of correspondence between the federal government, the LAOOC, and the Kremlin. The end of this study is marked by the conclusion of the Los Angeles Olympics on 12 August 1984.

1.8 Outline of Chapters

Following a brief introduction, Chapter 2 discusses the history of the Olympic Movement in the city of Los Angeles. A series of events transpired that permitted the city to host the Olympics in 1984, thus allowing Reagan to use the Olympics in his new foreign policy with the Soviet Union. First, the chapter provides a brief introduction to the 1932 Olympics held in Los Angeles. It was on the success of these Olympics that the Southern California Committee for the Olympic Games was formed. It was this Committee that worked tirelessly to promote the Olympic Movement in Los Angeles and to attempt to lure the worldwide festival back to their beloved city. Starting in the early 1960s, Chapter 2 examines the tumultuous history behind Los Angeles finally getting the Olympic Games again in 1984. In doing so, the chapter discusses Montreal's successful bid for the 1976 Olympics, Moscow's gain of the 1980 Games, and, finally, how Los Angeles earned the Games for 1984 through being the only choice and how the city nearly lost the right to host afterwards.

Chapter 3 follows Ronald Reagan's 1980 Presidential campaign and his eventual triumph over President Jimmy Carter. The chapter examines the differences between Carter's foreign policy against that of Reagan's proposed plans. From there, the chapter will discuss how Reagan's foreign policy assisted in the creation of his program dubbed "peace through strength." Chapter 3 presents a discussion of the early relationship between Leonid Brezhnev, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1964 until his death in 1982, and President Reagan. The correspondence between the two world leaders, as found in the Ronald Reagan Archives, depicts two

countries facing a foreign policy stalemate – neither wishing to concede to the other. It is with this setting that the chapter then examines Richard Pipes' first Soviet policy for President Reagan. The understanding of this policy is vital, as it stood as Reagan's posture towards the Soviet Union until late 1983. The chapter then examines how three events in the fall of 1983 signaled to President Reagan that American approach to the Soviet Union was in dire need of adjustment, thus deviating from Pipes' Soviet strategy. Lastly, Chapter 3 discusses Reagan's monumental 16 January 1984 speech in which he laid out his future plans for the Soviet Union, including his desire for peace, compromise, and quiet diplomacy as a result of extraordinary circumstances.

Chapter 4 opens with a discussion regarding President Reagan, the Olympics, and cultural exchanges between the United States of America and the Soviet Union. Exploring these relationships is important as the Soviet Union's shooting of KAL 007 brought a halting crash to much of it. Subsequently, Chapter 4 enters into a detailed examination of the KAL 007 incident and how it impacted both the American psyche and the Olympic Movement. The chapter then moves to a discussion of the Ban The Soviets Coalition, the *Gruzia*, and Olympic safety. Formed as a way to combat Soviet participation in the Olympics, the Ban the Soviets Coalition was largely a pest to the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, the American government, and the International Olympic Committee. The actions of the Ban the Soviets Coalition directly impacted guarantees of athlete safety at the Olympics, as well as the Soviet Union's request to berth the ship *Gruzia* at Long Beach Harbor during the duration of the Games. The chapter also examines how the majority of Ronald Reagan's administration was wholly against accommodating any Soviet requests for the Los Angeles Olympic Games.

In concluding, Chapter 4 examines how and why President Reagan ignored his closest advisors and unilaterally approved Soviet requests.

Chapter 5 investigates the Reagan administration's reaction when the Soviet Union announced its intentions to boycott the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Summer Games. As well, the chapter examines how the success of the Los Angeles Olympics spurred renewed interest in the Olympic Movement from other potential host cities. Chapter 5 also answers a rather vital question regarding this line of research – did Reagan only accommodate the Soviet Union to comply with the *Olympic Charter*? Chapter 5 also includes a brief look at Reagan's political manipulation of Romania in order to get the country to attend the Olympics. Chapter 5 concludes with an explanation of how Reagan's overtures at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics allowed for future positive relations between the President and new Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

Chapter 2 – The City of Angels

“Yes, our athletes have a love, a happiness, and an exuberance in being American. They’re as patriotic as the Pledge of Allegiance; as red, white, and blue as the flag. They’re filled with the spirit of our land in all of its magnificent diversity, a diversity you can see even in their faces. Ours are the faces of all humanity, just as our nation was built by the hopes of all humanity. So, as you watch these Olympics, remember – win, lose, or draw – how much we have to be proud and thankful for. After all, we’re Americans.”¹

2.1 The Battle of Los Angeles

That the 1984 Olympic Summer Games were held in Los Angeles was of no small consequence to the Ronald Reagan administration. It provided the President the opportunity to quickly commence the process of achieving his newly founded desire to begin repairing relations with the Soviet Union. The Los Angeles Olympics provided the reasoning for the two countries to communicate – even if the interaction was through the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee serving as an intermediary. Fortuitously for Reagan, those attempting to bring the Olympic Games to Los Angeles through the 1970s did not abandon their plans as the International Olympic Committee picked other world cities to host the Olympics. Finally, in the late 1970s, a series of events occurred that placed Los Angeles in an opportune position to host the 1984 Olympic Summer Games and, thus, gave Ronald Reagan his first chance at reconciliation with the Soviet Union.

¹ An excerpt from Ronald Reagan’s 17 September 1988 radio address to the nation concerning the upcoming Olympic Summer Games in Seoul, South Korea. For the entirety of the speech, please see the Reagan Archive’s digital collection of all his radio addresses.

The 1984 Olympic Summer Games was not the first time that the city of Los Angeles bid for the right to host the festival; nor was it the first time that the city hosted it. Having first hosted the Olympics in 1932, Los Angeles subsequently maintained a sustained history with the Olympic Movement. However, it was not until the bidding sequence for the 1976 Olympic Games did Cold War undertones imbed themselves into the Los Angeles Olympic narrative. The IOC's decision to award the 1976 Summer Olympics to Montreal had long-lasting ramifications that permitted the Ronald Reagan administration to use the 1984 Los Angeles Games as a political ploy in Cold War relations.

Formed in 1938 through a direct request of the United States Olympic Committee,² the Southern California Committee for the Olympic Games³ was organized by civic and Olympic leaders William May Garland and Paul Helms – both notable names synonymous with the Los Angeles Olympic Games. Garland, a member of the IOC from 1922 to 1948, successfully secured the bid for the 1932 Games and then led the process of hosting a highly successful Olympic festival in the midst of the Great Depression. Helms, on the other hand, is most remembered for being the baker behind the ‘Great Bread War’ between himself and IOC president Avery Brundage.⁴ The task of the SCCOG was quite clear: after the success of the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics, the

² The signing of the *Amateur Sports Act of 1978* officially marked the creation of the United State Olympic Committee. However, for the sake of clarity and consistency, the name United States Olympic Committee (hereafter USOC) will be used rather than American Olympic Committee.

³ Hereafter SCCOG

⁴ For more see Robert K. Barney, Stephen R. Wenn, and Scott G. Martyn, *Selling The Five Rings: The International Olympic Committee and the Rise of Olympic Commercialism* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2004), 31-49.

USOC directed the Southern California group to provide continued support for the Olympic Movement in Los Angeles and to bid for future Games. The group presented the Los Angeles bids to the IOC in 1948, 1952, and 1956. It presented the city to the USOC to be its candidate city for the 1960, 1964, 1968, 1972, 1976, 1980, and 1984 Olympic Games.⁵ When the USOC awarded international bidding rights to Los Angeles for the 1976 Summer Olympic Games, then Los Angeles mayor Sam Yorty called for the establishment of the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee.⁶ The purpose of the Committee was to lead the international voting effort, thus vesting the power to the LAOOC that the members of the SCCOG thought they rightfully maintained.

On 29 October 1962, then acting President of the Southern California Committee, Lee Combs, wrote a letter to IOC President Brundage.⁷ The subject was clear: Combs was not pleased with the final result of the 1964 domestic bid, the process of which granted American bidding rights to Detroit, Michigan over Los Angeles. In bullet-point fashion, Combs laid out his concerns to Brundage – the main one being that Detroit and its chief representative, Douglas Roby, “had no intentions of getting the Games to the United States, but wanted the bidding privilege solely for personal, local, and political reasons in order to get sports facilities for professional purposes in their own city.”⁸

⁵ <http://www.sccog.org/webapp/about-us>

⁶ Hereafter LAOOC.

⁷ Bill Harvey, the President of the Southern California Committee for the Olympic Games, fell too ill to complete his presidential duties during this period.

⁸ Lee Combs to Avery Brundage, 29 October 1962, Avery Brundage Collection (hereafter ABC), Box 113, Reel 62, The International Centre for Olympic Studies (hereafter ICOS), London, Ontario, Canada.

Combs also professed to Brundage that the awarding of the bid to Detroit was an insult to such men as William Garland and Paul Helms who “worked as dedicated men for over 30 years” in the name of the Olympic Movement.⁹

Correspondence between Combs and Brundage appears to have taken a seven-year hiatus after the bidding contest between Los Angeles and Detroit concluded. Correspondence between them started again in 1969 in the middle of Los Angeles’ international bid for the 1976 Summer Olympics. In a letter dated 21 March 1969, Combs opened with a matter-of-fact statement, expressing his concerns over the increasing professionalism in athletics. Combs knew how to play to a favorite Brundage peeve. Combs then moved on to the crux of his letter. Combs informed Brundage that he was “deeply concerned with the ‘tone,’ the personnel, and underlying purposes of the Los Angeles Mayor’s Committee...”¹⁰ Combs requested a personal meeting with Brundage in either Chicago or Santa Barbara, California to discuss the issue.¹¹

As the acting President of the Southern California Committee, Combs took it upon himself to attempt to place the SCCOG in what he thought was its rightful place – at the helm of Los Angeles’ international Olympic bid. With no apparent response from Brundage, Combs began to write directly to the Southern California Committee’s adversarial group – the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee. Additionally, Combs copied each letter directly to Brundage at the La Salle Hotel near Chicago’s

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Combs to Brundage, 21 March 1969, ABC, Box 194, Reel 112, ICOS.

¹¹ The Brundage Collection contains no reply to Combs’ request.

Monroe Harbor. In a 15 July 1969 letter to the LAOOC president, John Kilroy, Combs expressed the Southern California group's mounting concern over the 1976 Olympic Games, presenting to Kilroy a brief, if not a self-righteous history, of the SCCOG, which informed that his group had "been working on the matter [the Olympics] since 1936, the year when William May Garland, Paul Helms, and Ralph Chick organized it." Combs also let Kilroy know that the SCCOG maintained strong "international Olympic connections." Combs concluded an on arrogant note. Claiming he recently had had lunch with Brundage at the IOC President's request,¹² he implied that he was above Kilroy in Olympic matters as he had been involved with Olympic affairs "since 1926" and that the LAOOC had "problems of which" they were "not at all aware."¹³

On 29 July 1969, Combs responded to a letter from Kilroy. From Combs' pointed words, one can infer how Kilroy responded to Combs' earlier letter. Combs first chastised Kilroy for implying in his response that Combs was nothing more than a "concerned citizen" and not the "acting head of the Southern California Committee for the Olympic Games." Kilroy also insisted in his response to Combs that his group, the Los Angeles Olympic Committee, was working closely with the Southern California group. Combs vehemently argued otherwise, stating the members chosen to attend the LAOOC meetings were handpicked by the LAOOC, none of whom were sitting members of the SCCOG's executive board. Lastly, Combs informed Kilroy that the Southern California group was keeping Brundage abreast of the situation in an effort to "clear up"

¹² Nothing in the Brundage Collection exists to validate this claim.

¹³ Combs to John Kilroy, 15 July 1969, ABC, Box 194, Reel 112, ICOS.

erroneous impressions. Exactly which erroneous impressions Combs believed Brundage to be receiving were not addressed.¹⁴

Immediately after dispatching his letter to Kilroy, Combs prepared a missive to Brundage. The purpose of the letter was two-fold: (1) to argue to Brundage that the LAOOC, as formed by Mayor Yorty, was not legitimate when weighed against the *Olympic Charter* and (2) to explain that cooperation between the two groups was “wholly unsatisfactory.” Combs argued to the IOC President that *Olympic Charter* protocol placed the onus of building an organizing committee “on the shoulders of the National Committee [USOC] of the city to which the games were awarded.”¹⁵ Combs further argued that any right or privilege the LAOOC felt it inherited from Mayor Sam Yorty did “not extend to the creation of an organizing committee to conduct the Games, if awarded to Los Angeles.” Combs was not only railing against the LAOOC being in charge of the bidding process, but was also informing Brundage that the squabbling would endure if Los Angeles were awarded the 1976 Summer Olympic Games. Combs sent a copy of the letter to Kilroy.¹⁶

Unsatisfied with his effort thus far – the very next day Combs wrote yet another letter to Brundage. He charged the LAOOC as being nothing short of “opportunists and politicians.” Because of this, Combs reasoned, the Los Angeles group “ought not be permitted” to deal with Olympic matters. Knowing the Los Angeles group would be

¹⁴ Combs to Kilroy, 29 July 1969, ABC, Box 194, Reel 112, ICOS.

¹⁵ Combs to Brundage, 29 July 1969, ABC, Box 194, Reel 112, ICOS. Brackets mine.

¹⁶ Ibid.

infuriated with Combs' claim, Combs informed Brundage that he was very well aware that Kilroy would not be "happy with him" but that he could not "sit quietly by" and watch Los Angeles' Olympic dream go its present course.¹⁷

Combs received a reply from the Los Angeles group on 4 August 1969. In what surely implied an insult to Combs, the letter was sent by Paul Zimmerman – an advisor to the LAOOC. He was not a sitting member of the executive board. Zimmerman opened the letter to Combs by informing him that Kilroy was currently in Europe dealing with "pressing Olympic matters," lest Combs become further "hurt" by not receiving immediate responses. Zimmerman related that he was "startled" that Combs "would put self before the success of Los Angeles' bid by writing" as he did to Brundage. In response to Combs' disagreement over those Southern California group members picked to serve on the Mayor's committee, Zimmerman professed his personal opinion that Combs was simply upset that he was not appointed over the others. Zimmerman copied his letter to both Kilroy and Brundage.¹⁸

It took Combs only two days to respond to Zimmerman's charges. Combs informed Zimmerman that his personal attack was "not too surprising" especially coming from "an employee of a corporation like the Los Angeles 1976 Olympic Committee."¹⁹ Further, he charged that Zimmerman's claim of his [Combs'] hurt feelings over non-appointment to the Los Angeles Committee were "ridiculous." In a roundabout insult,

¹⁷ Combs to Brundage, 30 July 1969, ABC, Box 194, Reel 112, ICOS.

¹⁸ Paul Zimmerman to Combs, 4 August 1969, ABC, Box 194, Reel 112, ICOS.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Combs wrote: “without any compensation, I chairmanned an important national Olympic Committee when you [Zimmerman] were a young newspaper reporter for a local newspaper.”²⁰ Combs continued, “The time I have spent on Olympism and amateur sports has been without pay – a contribution of thousands of hours and tens of thousands of dollars cash over the last four and a half decades. Our two situations are not at all comparable.” Combs then lectured Zimmerman and the Los Angeles group in general for desiring to “preserve the ‘Garland Image’ as an asset in seeking the 1976 Games,” but doing so without inviting Garland,²¹ a well-respected members of the Southern California group’s executive board, to sit on the Los Angeles Olympic Committee. As he typically did, Combs ended the letter by assuring Zimmerman that Brundage would be receiving a copy of all correspondence between the two groups.²²

Indeed, Combs lost little time in apprising Brundage on the developments. True to his normal practice, Combs wrote to Brundage on the same day he replied to Zimmerman. The fact that Brundage had yet to reply to either group was either lost on Combs, or he simply did not care that Brundage appeared to be distancing himself from the situation. In his 6 August 1969 letter to Brundage, Combs perhaps made his boldest claim during the entirety of exchanges. He explained to Brundage that Mel Pierson, “who spearheaded the Mayor’s Committee about two years ago, is one of Mayor Yorty’s

²⁰ A well-known sports journalist, Zimmerman covered college football for the *Los Angeles Times* from 1931-68. He went on to cover three Olympic Games for the *New York Post*.

²¹ In this case, Combs is reference John Garland’s son who continued his father’s Olympic tradition.

²² Combs to Zimmerman, 6 August 1969, ABC, Box 194, Reel 112, ICOS.

Commissioners presently under indictment for bribery.”²³ Combs concluded, “without changes, I don’t think the Los Angeles 1976 Olympic Committee has enough solid Olympic background to qualify it to run the Olympic Games.”²⁴ Brundage, once again, did not respond. On 19 August 1969, Kilroy responded to Combs – copying Brundage – with a short and to-the-point letter. In it, Kilroy simply stated, “The Los Angeles 1976 Olympic Committee, as presently constituted, is duely [sic] authorized to represent the City of Los Angeles and the United States Olympic Committee in its quest for the 1976 Summer Games.”²⁵

The narratives of both the LAOOC and the Southern California group drastically changed on 21 November 1969 when the Soviet Union decided to make a late entry into the bidding contest. In a supposedly confidential report composed shortly after the Soviet announcement, the Los Angeles group put forth its understanding of the new Cold War connotations. The report stated that the Soviet bid was “not a challenge by Moscow to Los Angeles alone” but a “challenge to the United States by Russia in the name of Moscow.”²⁶ The Los Angeles group believed the Soviets were “exerting every conceivable pressure in every possible area of influence” and that “the tremendous effort” the Soviets put forth were “at the expense of their government.” To Brundage, who

²³ Serving as the Recreation and Parks Commissioner, a grand jury indicted Pierson in September 1968 on charges of bribery and conspiracy in the rezoning of land in the San Fernando Valley.

²⁴ Combs to Brundage, 6 August 1969, ABC, Box 194, Reel 112, ICOS.

²⁵ Kilroy to Combs, 19 August 1969, ABC, Box 194, Reel 112, ICOS.

²⁶ Status and Needs of the Los Angeles 1976 Olympic Committee Versus the Bid of Moscow for the XXIst Summer Olympiad, n.d., ABC, Box 194, Reel 112, ICOS.

detested any mixture of politics and the Olympic Movement, the brewing political confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union under the auspices of the 1976 Summer Games bidding process was an alarming development.

The Soviet's late entry into the 1976 Olympic bidding contest did not catch the LAOOC off guard. The internal report declared there was a "persistent rumor," though it is noted as "never confirmed," that "Moscow might come into the picture as a staging for a more serious bid in 1980." This is not to say the group was not worried by the Kremlin's actions. Certainly, the LAOOC was aware that the Moscow bid was "totally political" and "inspired under the guise of International Sports." Regardless of Soviet motivation, the leader of Los Angeles' Olympic bid understood that a Soviet bid could "thwart the otherwise apparent award [of the Olympics] to Los Angeles."²⁷ Indeed, the competition posed by Montreal was deemed an afterthought.

In its internal and confidential memo, the LAOOC outlined the entirety of the history between the Cold War and the Olympics, as well as editorializing its own thoughts into the narration. For example, the LAOOC felt the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Committee acted "courageously" in its refusal to allow an ocean liner to serve as official Soviet housing.²⁸ On the subject of the Soviet "run out" of the 1966 Duel Meet, the LAOOC felt it exemplified the belief that Soviet "sport commitments and political needs are not separated and subject to adjustment on a case basis for what they think is their greatest advantage." Lastly, the LAOOC pondered if the true justification behind the

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

Soviet bid was due to the Kremlin being “reluctant to have the many athletes of the Iron Curtain countries visit the United States.”²⁹

The memo also included numerous impacts the Moscow bid could theoretically have. Primarily, the LAOOC felt the Moscow bid “could open up the use of the sports media throughout the world for further political propaganda.” Such an occurrence, the LAOOC felt, was “a very substantial coup.” The LAOOC also made connections between the Soviet bid and the East-West Germany issue – what the group called a “tremendous interrelationship with the 1972 Games in Munich.” The LAOOC fretted that a denial of the 1976 Games to Moscow would result in a Soviet-led boycott of the 1972 Munich Games and “other pressures to save face with East Germany.”³⁰ While its first two concerns were quite legitimate, the LAOOC also discussed possible secondary impacts of the Moscow bid. In the occurrence of a Moscow loss in the bidding process, the LAOOC felt:

The Russians could emphasize that the IOC, ‘composed of royalty, colonists, imperialists and capitalists’ (their oft-stated words), had denied them their rightful bid for the Summer Games and that the actions in their denial should be justification for their (IOC) disbandment, and call for a referral of the matter of the Olympic Games to an ‘International Democratic Council’ composed of National Olympic Committees.³¹

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

The LAOOC argued that “the very fact of bidding” was a “substantial plus for Moscow unless the bid is countered by the award to Los Angeles.” Lastly, the memo closed the discussion of the USSR’s bid impact by emphasizing that “various federations and National Olympic Committees” created “concurrent pressures to further their own expansionistic aims pointing toward the direction of control of sport, television money and personal award.”³²

The impact and effects of a Moscow victory were also discussed in the memo. Broadly, the LAOOC felt the primary objective of a Soviet victory was to “defeat and deny the United States in the world sports movement.” As noted, this also included “control of international sports media for political purposes.” The LAOOC foresaw a more apocalyptic result of an award to Moscow: the Kremlin could “suggest that other countries not meeting their political criteria for one reason or another should not be admitted for the Games.” The LAOOC admitted this was a “wild claim” but that it was not out of the realm of possibilities.³³ Finally, the LAOOC argued the awarding of the Games to Moscow could effectively destroy the IOC:

The control of the bid by a country as powerful and as defiant as Russia and the continuous downgrading of the IOC by direct negotiations with the NOC committees and the sports federations while ignoring the IOC could destroy the total effect and strength of the IOC, causing its merger with an International Sports Council or equivalent. This is of particular

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

concern because of the advanced age of Avery Brundage, the real “strength” of the IOC today.³⁴

The Los Angeles group agreed on a two-pronged approach to counter the Moscow bid. First, the group went the commonly accepted route of receiving an official endorsement from the President of the United States. Additionally, the group desired that the President write privately and candidly to each member of the International Olympic Committee. Second, under the advisement of the State Department, the Los Angeles group endeavored in “all ways to try and obtain” the vote of those countries in Eastern Europe under the unwilling sphere of Soviet influence.³⁵ That Brundage was given access to this information, assumingly by Combs, did not forebode a promising future for the Los Angeles’ Olympic aspirations.

In May 1970, the International Olympic Committee faced an uncomfortable situation: both the United States and the Soviet Union bid for the right to host the 1976 Olympic Summer Games. By choosing either country, was the IOC picking a side in the Cold War’s ideological struggle? To avoid such an unsavory situation in both the Olympic Movement and international relations, the IOC opted to award Montreal with the responsibility of hosting the Summer Olympics in 1976.³⁶ The decision proved to

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ There was confusion on the part of the Soviets during the announcement made on 12 May 1970 at the RAI Centre Theatre in the Netherlands. Avery Brundage announced that while Moscow was ahead in the first count, no candidate city obtained an overall majority. There would be a second round of voting. Not waiting to hear the second part of Brundage’s announcement, TASS broadcasted a worldwide message informing that Moscow was victorious. Los Angeles was the first city voted out. Moscow won the first

alter the face of the Olympic Movement for years to come. As well, many in the southern California media felt that hosting the Olympics was a colossal mistake. A *Los Angeles Times* editorial argued that it was “foolishness for a 9-man delegation to go to Vienna to get the 1980 Olympic Games for L.A.” and that “a Los Angeles Olympics at some future time might be warranted.” As for the 1976 festival, many Los Angelenos watched happily as Montreal took on the burden.³⁷

Shortly after the vote, a flurry of letter writing took place. On 15 June 1970, Kilroy wrote to Brundage and exclaimed that the International Olympic Committee and its leaders failed “to impose upon themselves the same disciplines that they insist be imposed upon all other participants.” He then asked Brundage how the “traditional and oft stated objective of the Olympic ideal be extended to and understood by youth if it is not understood and practiced by the Committee.” Kilroy ended by insisting that the letter was written without acrimony.³⁸

In a 4 June 1970 letter to Al Stump of the *Herald Examiner*, Brundage claimed that the Los Angeles group’s reaction to the defeat was “disgraceful” and “as usual Avery Brundage” was blamed for the loss.³⁹ Brundage further vented his feelings in a 3 July 1970 letter to William Nicholas, the general manager of the Los Angeles Memorial

round of voting with 28 votes to Montreal’s 25. However, the second round of voting saw the previous American support swing to the Canadians for a 41-to-28 Montreal victory over Moscow.

³⁷ Staff editorial, “An Olympic Waste of Money,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 30 September 1974.

³⁸ Kilroy to Brundage, 15 June 1970, ABC, Box 194, Reel 112, ICOS.

³⁹ Brundage to Al Stump, 4 June 1970, ABC, Box 23, Reel 39, ICOS.

Coliseum Commission. Brundage felt that the “moans, groans, howls, and wails emanating from the Los Angeles group” were beginning to come to an end.⁴⁰ But, more importantly, he “resented” the Los Angeles group blaming the loss on the IOC President. Brundage was convinced that the failure of the Los Angeles bid was a result that the Americans had few friends when it came to “voting on matters” such as the Olympics – this, “despite the billions of aid that [America] has scattered through the world.” Brundage felt that the loss had much to do with the “newspapers of the world” being filled with the “Kent College affair and other anti-United States propaganda.” Lastly, Brundage confirmed to Nicholas that he was wholly “skeptical” of the promised votes Los Angeles felt they were due to receive.⁴¹

Lee Combs resumed his writing to Brundage on 16 June 1970. He conveyed to Brundage that he had “long hesitated” in writing because of the “catastrophe, so far as Los Angeles Olympism is concerned, that occurred in Amsterdam.”⁴² In light of the struggle with the Los Angeles group and the eventual loss of the city’s bid, Combs admitted to Brundage that he “seriously considered whether or not [he] should attempt to hold together an organization which [had] been deeply torn apart.”⁴³ Ultimately, Combs committed himself to doing so, but explained to Brundage his belief that too much damage was done to Los Angeles’ reputation because of the bickering and the Cold War.

⁴⁰ Brundage to William Nicholas, 3 July 1970, ABC, Box 194, Reel 112, ICOS.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Combs to Brundage, 16 June 1970, ABC, Box 194, Reel 112, ICOS.

⁴³ Ibid.

Combs told Brundage he felt it would be several decades before Los Angeles would recover and that he – meaning Combs – would be “gone” before the Olympics ever returned to his beloved city.⁴⁴

Combs summarized the entirety of the situation by saying the fighting, the bickering, and the Cold War overtones were a “shattering experience upon Los Angeles, its people,” and its Olympic dreams.⁴⁵ As Combs soon found out, however, the IOC’s decision to award the 1976 Olympic to Montreal was just the beginning for both Los Angeles’ Olympic dreams and an international and diplomatic struggle with the Soviet Union under the façade of international sport.

2.2 Los Angeles’ 1984 Bid for America

On 23 September 1977, Michael T. Harrigan sat before the House International Relations Subcommittee on International Organizations. Harrigan, the President of Trigon Sports and the Executive Director of the President’s Commission on Olympic Sports, was tasked with reporting back to then President Jimmy Carter on the most effective and prudent way to organize and protect amateur sports in the country. Harrigan’s Commission noted the same long-problematic symptoms of the country’s amateur sports system: athletes utilizing their own cash for training travel, athletes scarcely affording the costs of getting to the Olympic festival site.⁴⁶ Harrigan argued that

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Michael T. Harrigan to the House International Relations Subcommittee on International Organizations, 23 September 1977.

it was difficult for “any athlete that is not in school or college or who competes in a sport that is not part of school or college athletic programs has a tough time ... making ends meet.”⁴⁷

Harrigan’s speech before the Subcommittee had other agendas than simply providing possible solutions for amateur athletics in America. Harrigan informed his listeners of the crisis being created by the intersection of the Olympic Games and international politics. Moreover, Harrigan argued that “the Games may die if politics continue to raise their ugly spectre.”⁴⁸ Though Harrigan did not quite agree with a prominent friend’s assessment that the “Games may be lost forever” if the United States did not host the 1984 Summer Olympics, he did believe – no matter how misguided – that “only the U.S. can turn the clock back to a Games that is free from politics.”⁴⁹ Finally, Harrigan informed the Subcommittee that the Olympic Movement needed leadership to survive, and that their country could provide it “in a big way by hosting the 1984 Games.”⁵⁰ Luckily for Harrigan, Montreal’s hosting of the 1976 Summer Olympics Games quite likely insured that Los Angeles would be the home of the 1984 Olympics.

The man in charge of Montreal’s Olympic bid was Jean Drapeau, the flamboyant Mayor of the city from 1954 through 1957 and again from 1960 to 1986. Drapeau – of

⁴⁷ For example, Harrigan spoke of American speedskaters paying \$2,000 of their own money to train in Europe where refrigerated rinks remained easily accessible and that it costs Dorothy Hamill – an American figure skater -- \$17,000 a year of her own earnings to train.

⁴⁸ Harrigan, 2.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

French descent— became involved in the Olympic Games as early as 1966 when he led Montreal’s bid for the 1972 Olympic Games, which ultimately went to Munich. The loss did not deter Drapeau. Described as a man of “sober dress” and with a “neatly trimmed moustache,” Drapeau continued to work Olympic circles, often approaching those in power with the opening line, “Sir, may I talk to you about Montreal?”⁵¹ During these conversations, Drapeau often spoke of the “autofinancement” of the Olympic Games – or, his belief that the Olympic Games were completely capable of funding themselves. It was partly this belief that led to his stance that all those staying in the Olympic Village would do so at no costs if the IOC awarded the Games to Montreal in 1972.⁵²

In contrast to Drapeau’s beliefs, the Olympic Movement was struggling with the spiraling costs of organizing the event. The Montreal Mayor paid no mind. When Montreal was awarded the 1976 Olympic Games, he claimed that “the Olympics could no more produce a deficit, than a man a baby.”⁵³ The Montreal Organizing Committee tabbed the estimated costs of hosting the Olympics at \$310 million; a handsome profit was likely. The group could not have been more in error. A significant number of setbacks and cost overruns devastated Montreal’s Olympic budget. By the time the Games moved onwards to 1980 and Moscow, the city of Montreal was burdened with debts of over \$1 billion. It took the province of Quebec – and its tax dollars – over thirty years to erase the deficit caused by hosting the Olympic festival.

⁵¹ Lord Killanin, *My Olympic Years* (The Pitman Press: Bath, UK, 1983), 121.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Michael Payne, *Olympic Turnaround: How the Olympic Games Stepped Back from the Brink of Extinction to Become the World’s Best Known Brand* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Press, 2006), 9.

With Moscow hosting the 1980 Olympic Summer Games, the city of Los Angeles focused on the 1984 festival. It was thought that Los Angeles' first-round ouster for the 1976 Olympics was the result of the city's bid committee only desiring to make its interest in the 1984 Games known to the members of the IOC.⁵⁴ The possibility also existed that President Nixon informed Brezhnev that Los Angeles was not going to bid in earnest until the next Olympiad.⁵⁵ At the American level, the United States Olympic Committee received luke warm interest – at best – from other cities aside from Los Angeles. Atlanta provided a brief – yet underwhelming – interest in hosting, with the leader of the movement bellowing that the cost of bringing the Games to Atlanta would be between \$300-400 million and that the financial crisis of Montreal would not be repeated, as Atlanta was “much better organized.”⁵⁶ Of the other potential suitors – New York City, Boston, Chicago, and New Orleans – only New York City seemed prepared to tackle the herculean task of bidding for and, hopefully, hosting the Olympic Games. New York's bid was backed by a governor prepared to provide \$225 million to the Olympic project. Furthermore, the mayor invigorated his constituents with his desire to use the Olympics Games as a springboard to provide the necessary enlargement and refurbishing of downtrodden Shea Stadium in Queens.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Press Reports, “Moscow Awarded '80 Games, Mayor Says Everyone Welcome,” *Globe and Mail*, 24 October 1974.

⁵⁵ C. Booker, *The Games War: A Moscow Journal* (London: Fakenham Press, 1981), 22.

⁵⁶ Robert Lamb, “The Olympics: Is 1984 Our Year?,” *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 27 November 1976.

⁵⁷ David Anable, “U.S. cities race to host '84 Summer Olympics,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 27 July 1977.

As Los Angeles and New York City geared up their bid campaigns, the leaders of the Southern California Committee for the Olympic Games were all but claiming victory. Though John Argue, the lawyer overseeing Los Angeles' bid, conceded that the Los Angeles group was "taking New York very seriously," he believed that the Southern California city maintained a "commanding lead." With a Los Angeles victory predicted by those behind it, public concern in Los Angeles over the cost of the Olympics became a pressing issue. The bid committee asserted – that even under the worst of circumstances – the city was likely to break even, if not turn a \$200 million profit.⁵⁸ Others vehemently disagreed. Economic analyst Susan Fields defied the Committee, and publically argued that a net loss of over \$336 million was likely "depending on various unpredictable factors, such as the uncertain costs of providing an Olympic Village to house athletes."⁵⁹ Fields made sure to mention that the numbers, presented in 1977 dollars, "could be substantially higher" with inflation" by 1984. Argue came to the defense of the Los Angeles Committee, correcting Fields, insisting that the Committee planned "to put on a Spartan, business like Olympics."⁶⁰ Further, Argue explained that the television rights and sales of commemorative coins were likely to provide nearly \$200 million in revenues.⁶¹ Others intimate with the bid confirmed Argue's statements. Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley stated for the record that the "back to basics" approach the bid

⁵⁸ Robert Lindsey, "Backers of Bid for Games Present Optimistic Forecast on Financing, but City Researcher Differs," *The New York Times*, 7 August 1977.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

committee was seeking allowed Los Angeles to “minimize overhead and turn back the spiral of grand shows and high deficits.”⁶² The Governor of California, Edmond Brown, noted that as long “as the proposal is sound, the real focus ought to be on the athlete and individual competitions and the commitment to excellence. It’s not just something to make businessmen a few extra profits.”⁶³

Two days before the 26 September 1977 USOC meeting to pick the American host nominee, USOC President Robert J. Kane made it clear that both the “proposals by Los Angeles and New York City” were in “excellent order.” And, to dispel rumors, he insisted that New York City had not “gained the edge” over Los Angeles and that “it was a close horse race.”⁶⁴ However, the Los Angeles Committee had reason to worry. During the meetings with the USOC in Colorado Springs, Colorado, the New York Committee invited New York Governor Hugh Carey to guarantee the USOC that “exclusive of any possible federal aid, New York State would erase any deficit New York City might sustain” if it were to host the 1984 Olympic Summer Games. Carey’s arrival was memorable: arriving several hours before the Los Angeles Mayor, Carey “roared into town in a limousine and made a flamboyant entry to a USOC luncheon to which both delegations had been invited. He was accompanied by numerous aides.”⁶⁵

⁶² Judith Frutig, “Los Angeles rides Olympic hopes,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 28 September 1977.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ AP Reports, “Coast-To-Coast Battle Raging for Olympics,” *The Hartford Courant*, 24 September 1977.

⁶⁵ Kenneth Reich, “L.A. Summons Brown to Give Olympics Bid a Boost,” *Los Angeles Times*, 25 September 1977.

The state of New York's pledge to the Olympics was a devastating blow to Los Angeles' chances. Governor Brown, stating his stance on Los Angeles' Olympic bid, reiterated that he wanted to "conduct the Games in an era of limits, not opulence" and that he desired to "make sure no public funds would be pumped in."⁶⁶ Despite Brown's stance, the Los Angeles Committee immediately summoned the Governor to Colorado Springs to – if anything – balance off the attendance of Governor Carey. In a cryptic message from Gray Davis, Brown's executive secretary, it was announced, "circumstances" in Colorado Springs "have changed and the governor's presence is important."⁶⁷ Brown immediately chartered a private jet from Santa Maria, California and arrived at the USOC meeting in mere hours. While Brown could not make the same financial assurances as New York, he guaranteed to the United States Olympic Committee that the Los Angeles bid group had the backing and blessing of the state government.

Despite the vast difference in governmental support, Los Angeles successfully secured the American nomination and stood poised to move on to the international bidding phase. New York's desire to use the Olympics to bolster Shea Stadium may have caused more concern in the voting than originally anticipated. The USOC feared that M. Donald Grant, the chairman of the board of the New York Mets, the principal tenant of Shea Stadium, "would refuse to move his team to Yankee Stadium for the year that the

⁶⁶ Kenneth Reich, "No State Aid for Olympics, Brown Repeats," *Los Angeles Times*, 27 September 1977.

⁶⁷ Reich, "L.A. Summons Brown to Give Olympics Bid a Boost."

Olympics” were to be held.⁶⁸ With the national victory secured, Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley continued to press the issue of a Spartan Olympics, saying, “we have no intention of going into the red. We think our revenue projections are sound and conservative. We think our managerial abilities will prevent the expenditures from getting out of hand.”⁶⁹ E. Newman Black IV, the chairman of the USOC’s site selection committee suggested that Los Angeles’ financial plan, and the fact that its existing stadium was not come burdened with potential scheduling issues, factored into the results, commenting that Los Angeles provided “a very low capital spending budget, involving its existing coliseum.”⁷⁰

2.3 The Only Choice

It was an unprecedented dilemma for the IOC. Due to the financial disaster of the Montreal Olympics, as well as the terrorist attack at the 1972 Munich Games, little interest prevailed from governments to host ever-expanding Games. Los Angeles and Tehran, Iran stood as the only cities to formally bid for the 1984 Olympic Games. The underlying belief was that Tehran would have lost to Los Angeles regardless, as the Iranian Olympic Committee campaigned “openly for the admission of Communist China to the Olympic Movement and the expulsion of the Republic of China (Taiwan).”⁷¹

⁶⁸ Wire Services, “It’s Los Angeles over New York for Olympic site,” *Boston Globe*, 26 September 1977.

⁶⁹ AP Reports, “Los Angeles Picked Over New York for ’84 Olympics,” *Hartford Courant*, 26 September 1977.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Geoffrey Miller, “Los Angeles Seeking 1984 Olympic Games,” *Centre Daily Times*, 18 October 1976.

Tehran's desires were of small benefit, as the support of the IOC remained solidly with the Taiwanese Olympic Committee. However, with Tehran's ultimate decision to withdraw its bid, the International Olympic Committee had no choice but to hear Los Angeles' proposal as the only remaining bid city. Lord Killanin, who served as the President of the IOC from 1972 until just before the Moscow Olympics in 1980, reasoned:

Whlist it is disappointing that there is only one candidate for the Olympic Games, it is not surprising. Los Angeles had already made two previous and unsuccessful bids. Los Angeles therefore was in a strong position to be awarded the Games for 1984. Further, I have no doubt that smaller National Olympic Committees have been frightened by the exaggerated statements regarding costs. It is important to distinguish between capital costs that are of lasting benefit to the areas concerned, and the running costs that showed a profit of \$940.9 million in Munich and \$126.8 million in Montreal.⁷²

However, what Lord Killanin deemed "exaggerated statements" regarding the financial implication of hosting the Olympic Games proved to be threats to the future financial solvency of each and every host city. Despite the Cold War undertones of the approaching 1980 Moscow Olympics, and the tragedy that occurred at the 1972 Munich Olympics, many still felt that "the most immediate threat to the future of the Olympics" was not "politics or nationalism" but "the cost of hosting the Games."⁷³ However, Los

⁷² Lord Killanin, "1984," *Olympic Review*, October 1977, 664.

⁷³ Ross Atkin, "Costs impair Olympics; Red Grange was 'hot' too," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 11 November 1977.

Angeles' bid for the Olympic Games was on much sturdier ground than the previous Summer Olympics. For example, Los Angeles planned to spend only \$33.5 million on the entirety of their construction costs; Montreal spent \$650 million solely on the construction of the Olympic stadium.⁷⁴

The estimated low costs to produce the Olympic Games in Los Angeles was not enough to quell still more vocal outcry from both the public and the Los Angeles City Council. On 15 November 1977, Baxter Ward, the Supervisor of Los Angeles County, proposed that the county's voters "decide whether or not to ban the use of county funds to finance the 1984 Olympic Games."⁷⁵ The movement was nothing more than a ceremonial ploy by the County Supervisor, something confirmed by John McFaden, the Vice President of the Southern California Committee for the Olympic Games, who explained that the county's vote was completely unnecessary. McFaden further argued that the county was not "involved in any way, shape or form in staging the games. As well, the Vice President of the SCCOG insisted that Los Angeles was not "another Munich; we are not another Montreal."⁷⁶

However, Council members Bob Ronka and Joy Picus provided another question to the citywide referendum up for vote in June of the following year (1978). Rather than simply asking Los Angeles residents whether or not county funds could be used – which

⁷⁴ Ibid. Los Angeles was able to do so much with so little because of existing infrastructure in Southern California. For example, the track and field events were to be held in the Coliseum (92,500 seats), soccer in the Rose Bowl (100,000 seats), and gymnastics in UCLA's Pauley Pavilion (13,500 seats).

⁷⁵ Bruce Keppel, "Ward Proposes County Vote on Olympic Funds," *Los Angeles Times*, 16 November 1977.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

the Olympic bid committee had no desire to do to begin with – the Council planned on introducing the bill to allow the “city voters” to decide “whether the city should be prohibited from hosting the Olympics at all.”⁷⁷ Argue, the head of the SCCOG, insisted that delaying a vote on the issue until June of the following year “would get in the way of the city’s being awarded the Games at a scheduled International Olympic Committee meeting in Athens” the following May.⁷⁸ While holding a news conference at the New Otani to address the issue, Argue pledged to guarantee a fiscally responsible Olympic Games. Both he and Mayor Bradley were resisting “exorbitant demands from the International Olympic Committee and the International Sports Federations.” To drive his point home, Argue laid out the ultimatum that Los Angeles was either “going to do it in a financially responsible way, or not at all” and that the city of Los Angeles would “rather lose the Olympics than go forward on the wrong basis.”⁷⁹

Aside from the citywide referendum issue, the Los Angeles Olympic Bid Committee was also close to completing an “extremely detailed IOC and Sports Federations questionnaire” that the city was required to provide to the IOC by the end of 1977. In the same news conference, Argue informed those present that he planned to “answer some questions yes and some questions no.” As well, the bid committee fully believed that the IOC and Federations were likely to ask for things the city was not prepared to provide, insisting on the questionnaire that because of their “first duty” being

⁷⁷ Kenneth Reich, “Ordinance to Bar L.A. Funding of Olympics Urged,” *Los Angeles Times*, 22 November 1977.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

to the “taxpayers of our city, we can’t give them everything they would like to have.” As an example of the hardnosed attitude Los Angeles planned to put forth with the IOC, Argue noted that at the USOC meeting the previous September, the city “said no to a permanent velodrome, no to a closed swim stadium, and no to a fancier rowing course, and no to a practice track near the Coliseum.”⁸⁰

Los Angeles’ inflexible stance on hosting a financially austere Olympics was an acceptable desire by IOC standards. However, it was the city’s intentions on how to do so that ratcheted the ire of the international organization. The SCCOG presented its completed questionnaire to the IOC, who deemed some of the answers “arrogant – even insulting.”⁸¹ Specifically, the IOC abhorred the SCCOG’s forthrightness in declaring that the city would be “responsible for television rights” and avowed that “all television revenue” would be kept by the city to offset the cost of producing and hosting the Olympic Games. The Los Angeles group was most peeved by Rule 21 of the *Olympic Charter*, which read:

... cities entrusted with the organization of the Olympic Games shall be liable to pay to the IOC whatever sum the IOC shall have fixed ... all sums arising out of the celebration of the Olympic Games belong to the International Olympic Committee. It reserves the right opt grant a portion

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Associated Press Report, “Olympic Committee angry with Los Angeles, other bids welcome,” *Daily Collegian*, 30 March 1978.

to the Organizing Committee and to allocate a portion to the International Federations and the National Olympic Committees.⁸²

In a letter to the SCCOG, the IOC instructed the Southern California group that the overseers of the Olympic Movement had “the last word on television contracts” and that there was installed a “regular formula for splitting up the revenue, with a little more than one-third going to the IOC and the rest to the local organizing committee.”⁸³ The SCCOG responded to the IOC, writing, “These provisions ... are unacceptable to the City of Los Angeles. ... All sums will be received and controlled by the OGOC [the organizing committee that will be formed once the Games are awarded] which has the responsibility for staging the Games.”⁸⁴ To counter Los Angeles’ claims, Lord Killanin stated that the IOC maintained “contingency plans” if hosting the Olympics in Southern California became an impossibility, as well as noting that the leaders of Montreal’s Olympic Games vowed to host again in 1984 if “... [Los Angeles] could not.”⁸⁵ Tom Keller, the President of the General Assembly of International Sports Federations, agreed with this sentiment, arguing, “there are many other cities which could handle the Games, and are geared for them, like Munich and Montreal.”⁸⁶

⁸² Bill Mallon and Ian Buchanan, *Historical Dictionary of the Olympic Movement* (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2006).

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Sarah Pileggi, “High-level negotiations pay off,” *Sports Illustrated*, 24 April 1978, 75.

⁸⁵ AP Report, “Los Angeles Olympic Bid for ’84 Games in Jeopardy,” *The New York Times*, 30 March 1978.

⁸⁶ The Associated Press, “Los Angeles Criticized Over Games,” *The New York Times*, 9 April 1978.

The Executive Committee of the IOC deplored Los Angeles' attempting to usurp the powers of the international organization. As well, the Executive Committee went on record as being regretful that only having one candidate city was unfortunate, as it provided Los Angeles, in the circumstance, to be more aggressive than any other previous potential host city.⁸⁷ Anton Calleia, the chief aide to Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley, attempted to clarify that SCCOG was not "challenging the authority of the international committee." Rather, the Southern California group was simply signifying that the city of Los Angeles maintained no plans to "sign a blank check" in order to ensure the Games did not place Los Angeles in an unrecoverable debt for the foreseeable future.⁸⁸

All involved parties – the SCCOG, President Killanin, the USOC, and the General Assembly of International Sports Federations – convened for a "take-it-or-leave-it" meeting in Mexico City the second week of April 1978. With the host city selection merely a month away in Athens, the Los Angeles group steadfastly refused to agree to "any conditions" that did not "give the city complete control over the "cost of staging the Games."⁸⁹ In a press conference after the meeting in Mexico City, Mayor Bradley cited

⁸⁷ Wolf Lyberg, ed., *IOC Executive Committee Minutes*, Volume III 1969-1981 (1992), 207. All volumes are housed at the International Centre for Olympic Studies Archives, Western University, London, Ontario, Canada. This specific session of the IOC Executive Committee was held on January 25-26 – so, shortly after receiving Los Angeles' completed questionnaire.

⁸⁸ Staff editorial, "Killanin vs. city of LA," *The New York Times*, 3 April 1978.

⁸⁹ Robert Lindsey, "I.O.C., Los Angeles to Have Showdown," *The New York Times*, 9 April 1978. Just before the date of the meeting, Montreal Mayor Jean Drapeau wrote a letter to LA Mayor Bradley. In it, Drapeau responded to the charges that he was attempting to capitalize on the "current disagreements" between Los Angeles and the IOC. Drapeau informed Bradley that Montreal was more than prepared to help solve the "impasse" if Los Angeles was not able to host the Olympics. It is noted that "in view of the

that Los Angeles representatives used the meeting to “acknowledge public cynicism and distrust” towards the city’s desire to conduct low-cost Olympics, as well to make sure that those on the outside did not compare Los Angeles’ bid to Munich or Montreal, “or any other city which had large cost overruns.”⁹⁰ To avoid “runaway deficits,” the representatives of both Los Angeles and the IOC agreed on three key decisions. First, the gathered representatives decided that Los Angeles would continue to maintain “veto power over any decision which could increase the cost of the 1984 Games.” Second, the IOC agreed to let Los Angeles negotiate its own television rights as long as the city provided one-third of “all television revenue to the IOC.” Lastly, Killanin agreed to waive a “rule assigning all proceeds from the Games to the International Committee.” After taking the first \$1 million in revenues, the IOC would share – on a “sliding scale” – all additional revenues with the soon-to-be-created Los Angeles Olympic Committee.⁹¹ With the agreements in place, Lord Killanin took the decisions back to the IOC which would decide the fate of Los Angeles’ bid during the May 17-18 gathering in Athens, Greece.

At the IOC meeting of 17-18 May, Lord Killanin announced Los Angeles as the provisional host of the 1984 Olympic Summer Games. The award, Killanin explained,

billion-dollar deficit” accrued by Montreal’s hosting of the 1976 Olympics, Drapeau’s move was “greeted with incredulity and considerable opposition.

⁹⁰ Judith Frutig, “Los Angeles pushing hard for austere ’84 Olympics,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 14 April 1978.

⁹¹ Ibid.

was “subject to the city’s entering into a contract in accordance with the Olympic rules and in the form prescribed by the IOC before August 1st.”⁹² Though the previous meeting in Mexico City laid the foundations of an agreement, no official contract was yet signed by either involved party. Before any contractually binding agreement could be signed, Los Angeles Mayor Bradley was faced with the onus of getting the majority of eight votes he needed from the 15-member city council in order to approve the contract. By mid-May, Bradley – who the media argued was staking “his political reputation on his ability to return the quadrennial amateur sports event to its 1932 home” – had the public support of only six council members.⁹³ More daunting than finding the two additional votes was overcoming the vehement opposition, led by council members Zev Yaroslavsky and Peggy Stevenson. Yaroslavsky, aside from introducing a resolution forcing Mayor Bradley “to provide the council with full and complete information about all commitments made concerning the Games,” was also considering pushing a resolution that forced the Olympic issue to a public vote in November.⁹⁴ With the IOC demanding an August 1 decision, a public vote in November signaled possible demise of Los Angeles’ Olympic aspirations. Stevenson publically announced her intentions to vote against the Olympic contract, calling Mayor Bradley, “double-crossed by the landed gentry and aristocrats” of the IOC.⁹⁵

⁹² John K. Cooley, “Los Angeles gets Olympics,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 19 May 1978.

⁹³ Judith Frutig, “Bradley faces uphill Olympics battle at home,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 22 May 1978.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.



Figure 2.1 John Argue explains to the media that the city may withdraw its bid for the 1984 Olympic Games. Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley looks on. From the *Centre Daily Times*, 19 July 1978.

As early as 1 June, Councilman Marvin Braude was arguing that it was time to “pull the plug” on Los Angeles’ Olympic bid and formally withdraw its offer to the IOC.⁹⁶ Even former Olympic athletes were writing off the Los Angeles bid. Dwight Stones, the former world-record holder in the high jump, insisted “if they [SCCOG] think they can hold the Olympics in Los Angeles without it costing the taxpayers, they’re crazy.”⁹⁷ The public – and, more importantly, the Los Angeles City Council – agreed

⁹⁶ United Press Services, “Los Angeles Councilman Calls Olympic Bid Dead,” *The New York Times*, 1 June 1978.

⁹⁷ Staff reports, “Dwight Stone on L.A. Olympics,” *The New York Times*, 11 June 1978.

with Stones' assessment. After the tax revolt that was Proposition 13 passed in the State of California, leading to the closing of branch libraries in many cities, the cancelling of summer school sessions throughout the state, and the dilution of police and fire protection – it was highly unlikely that the Los Angeles Council would approve the Olympic measure.⁹⁸ Sensing impending failure – and a looming deadline from the IOC – Mayor Bradley announced on 18 July 1978 his recommendation that Los Angeles withdraw its bid for the 1984 Summer Olympics. Bradley argued that the city's requirement to take on full financial responsibility for the Olympic Games was “unacceptable.” Killanin unwaveringly retorted that the “IOC must protect itself for the future and not compromise itself with other cities.”⁹⁹

Mayor Bradley's and SCCOG President Argue's intent to explore ending Los Angeles' Olympic aspirations turned out to be an effective strategy. With no solid backup plan aside from general interest from Montreal, Lord Killanin informed the USOC that the deadline for the Los Angeles committee to agree to IOC conditions was to be extended until 21 August 1978. Mayor Bradley and the SCCOG still hoped to install a private corporation to oversee the hosting of the Olympics, thus relieving taxpayers of the burden of paying for the Games. President Killanin considered Bradley's response to the IOC's rejection of this stipulation “hasty.” Argue asked for a face-to-face meeting with Killanin in hopes of extending the deadline even further – to 31 August 1978 – but was

⁹⁸ Ron Rapoport, “Olympics aren't selling in Los Angeles,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, 14 June 1978.

⁹⁹ Associated Press, “Los Angeles May Withdraw Bid for '84 Games,” *The Centre Daily Times*, 19 July 1978.

turned away by the Irish lord, who reiterated, “Until the Games are awarded, it is essential to deal with the USOC and the mayor.”¹⁰⁰

With the deadline officially extended by the IOC, the USOC extended a helping hand to Los Angeles. In a proposed partnership, the USOC agreed to assume the financial responsibility of the 1984 Olympics if hosted in Los Angeles. William Simon, the treasurer of the USOC, reasoned that a Los Angeles Games was likely to produce a profit of \$100 million, if not more, explaining, “it will not become another Montreal, which had construction costs of \$1.3 billion. Los Angeles needs only to build a swimming pool, velodrome and rowing course and to install a track in the Coliseum at an estimated price of \$33.4 million.” Because of the other athletic facilities already in place in Southern California, the city of Los Angeles could produce the Olympic Games at a cost of \$183 million, as opposed to Montreal’s \$1.6 billion.¹⁰¹ While the specifics were not yet finalized, Robert Kane – president of the USOC – further explained that the “plan would be for the City of Los Angeles to sign its contract with the IOC according to the rules” and “within that contract, it would be certified that the organizing committee of Los Angeles, in partnership with the United States Olympic Committee, would indemnify the City of Los Angeles.”¹⁰² As well, despite admitting that it was likely against IOC regulations, Kane announced that there existed “several large private corporations in the

¹⁰⁰ Associated Press, “Los Angeles May Still Get Bid for the 1984 Olympic Games,” *The Centre Daily Times*, 20 July 1978.

¹⁰¹ Staff reports, “Free Ride,” *The Washington Star*, 30 July 1978.

¹⁰² Neil Amdur, “Los Angeles Given Olympic Aid Offer,” *The New York Times*, 29 July 1978.

United States” willing to “underwrite the 1984 Summer Olympics in exchange for a share in the profits.”¹⁰³

Deviating from the *Olympic Charter*, Lord Killanin provisionally permitted Los Angeles to host the Olympics without the city’s taxpayers having to contribute pending an IOC mail ballot of its membership. The USOC’s decision to intervene was paramount in the eyes of the IOC. At the conclusion of an 30-31 August Executive Committee meeting of the IOC at the Chateau de Vidy in Lausanne, Killanin issued a press release that stated, “the IOC Executive Committee has unanimously recommended a postal vote to close on 7 October 1978, on the agreements...”¹⁰⁴ Killanin also admitted that the Olympic opportunity should have been taken away from Los Angeles at the original deadline, but “many [executive committee] members wished to help” Los Angeles.¹⁰⁵ The completed IOC postal vote was overwhelmingly positive for Los Angeles: 74 ayes, three nays, and eight abstentions.¹⁰⁶ Lord Killanin remarked, “Under the contract that has now been drawn, the city of [Los Angeles] is absolved of liability, which is handed instead to the USOC and the private LAOOC. It may be a pattern for Olympic Games of the future.”¹⁰⁷ Mayor Bradley was ecstatic at getting the Games back to Los Angeles for the first time since William May Garland and Paul Helms worked persistently to bring

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Lyberg, ed., *IOC Executive Committee Minutes*, Volume III 1969-1981 (1992), 219.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Kenneth Reich and Bill Boyarskey, “IOC approves L.A. bid for ’84 Olympics,” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 October 1978.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

the festival to the City of Angels in 1932. Concerning the final approval of the IOC, Bradley remarked, “It is of great significance that the 1984 Olympics will come to Los Angeles without burdening our local citizens with huge tax bills. Gone are the days of unbridled extravagance.”¹⁰⁸

2.4 The LAOOC and Onward

On 26 March 1979, Peter Ueberroth – the President of First Travel Corporation – received a phone call in his office. On the other end was Paul Ziffren, a representative of the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee – the group formed to handle the logistics of hosting the 1984 Los Angeles Summer Olympics. The purpose of the call was to inform Ueberroth, after multiple meet and greets and interviews, that he was elected President of the LAOOC, and that Ziffren himself was named chairman.¹⁰⁹

Shortly after Ueberroth’s election as President, tensions rose in Moscow. The first hint of discontent was the White House’s – specifically President Jimmy Carter’s – defiance over the standard protocol of flying the American flag over the Moscow Olympic Stadium during the closing ceremonies of the 1980 Olympic Games. Further, as a result of the American-led boycott of the Moscow Olympics, the U.S. government informed both the Soviet and the IOC that ‘Old Glory’ was not to fly “at any time during

¹⁰⁸ Mark Stevens, “Los Angeles caps Olympics cost,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 16 October 1978.

¹⁰⁹ Peter Ueberroth, Richard Levin, and Amy Quinn, *Made in America: His Own Story* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1985), 32-3.

the Games.”¹¹⁰ According to Monique Berlioux, the director of the IOC, the raising of the American flag – as dictated in the *Olympic Charter* – symbolized the closing of the Moscow Olympiad, and the beginning of the Los Angeles Olympiad. Ignaty Novikov, the deputy prime minister of the Soviet Union and President of the Moscow Organizing Committee, quelled the swelling discussion by stating that American action towards the Moscow Olympics was likely to result in a Soviet-led boycott of the 1984 Olympics. Novikov summarized, “we want to be present at Los Angeles, and we shall try to be present, not like the Americans. But time can change a great deal. We would like to think there will be good mutual understanding, after what has happened, and it will be a pleasure for us to participate, if we are invited.”¹¹¹

Ueberroth quickly learned, however, that the Soviets were not always true to their word. As well, the LAOOC Chief was soon to find out that the intrusion of politics into the Olympic Movement did not end with President Carter’s boycott movement. Rather, Ueberroth’s vision for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games became dramatically intertwined with the soon-to-be elected Reagan administration’s desire to revamp and improve American-Soviet relations through a rapprochement foreign policy. The hosting of the 1984 Olympic Games in the United States was to become an agent of that rapprochement.

¹¹⁰ Associated Press, “Olympics to Fly Old Glory: Soviets Turn Other Cheek,” *The Hartford Courant*, 16 July 1980.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Chapter 3 – Going Red: Ronald Reagan’s Presidency

“... and how stands the city on this winter night? More prosperous, more secure, and happier than it was eight years ago. ... And she’s still a beacon, still a magnet for all who must have freedom, from all the pilgrims from all the lost places who are hurtling through the darkness, towards home.”¹

3.1 Carter to Reagan

At approximately 8:15pm on 4 November 1980, NBC News declared Ronald Reagan, with running mate George H.W. Bush, victorious in the 49th quadrennial Presidential election. Reagan’s triumph over incumbent President Jimmy Carter was staggering in its numbers: the Republican duo beat Carter by nearly 10 percentage points in the popular vote and decimated the former Naval Midshipman in the electorate system – Carter winning only 49 electoral college votes to Reagan’s imposing 489. Carter’s turn-of-the-hour concession marked the worst election performance by an incumbent President since Franklin D. Roosevelt used his promise of a “new deal” to secure a resounding 18-percent margin of victory over Herbert Hoover. Further, less than five percent difference prevented all of Carter’s few-and-far between “blue states” from turning red in the historic landslide, not only slighting Carter’s campaign, but also exemplifying the American public’s desire for a categorically different direction for the

¹ At approximately 9:02 at night on 11 January 1989, Reagan delivered his farewell address to the nation from the Oval Office. This quote is an excerpt from the final minutes of his speech. For the entirety of the speech, please see Davis Houck and Amos Kiewe, *Actor, Ideologue, Politician: The Public Speeches of Ronald Reagan* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993), 322-27. The context of the speech discusses America as a “city upon a hill,” a reference to the parable of Salt and Light in Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew 5:14, Jesus informs his listeners, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.” Reagan also used the reference in his Republican presidential nomination speech on 23 August 1984, explaining his dream where America stood as a “shining city on a hill.” Kiewe, *Actor, Ideologue, Politician: The Public Speeches of Ronald Reagan* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993), 322-27.

“city upon a hill.” Carter’s election thrilled foreign countries just as equally. In a “humiliating and frustrating episode” for the Carter administration, the Iranians released American hostages minutes into Reagan’s presidency.² The release of the hostages on the morning of Reagan’s inauguration was yet another embarrassing blow to the Carter administration.³

The outgoing President’s blunders and dangerously ill-conceived notion of American public despondence was a critical factor in not only Carter’s election loss but also more so in Reagan’s dominating victory. The Carter era coincided with stagnant wages, double-digit inflation, poor benefits for non-union workers, and an increasing number of lost jobs. Carter informed the American people that the nation’s problems were of their own making – that a “crisis” reflected an “erosion of confidence” that struck “at the very heart and soul and spirit of the national will” which threatened “to destroy the social and political fabric of America.”⁴ On the other side of the spectrum stood

² John Roberts, *Twentieth Century: A History of the World, 1901-2000* (New York: Viking Press, 1999), 742.

³ Michael Deaver, Reagan’s Deputy Chief of Staff, recalled that Carter placed a call to the President-elect at 7:00am the morning of the inauguration to inform Reagan that the release of the hostages was imminent. Carter was dismayed to learn that his call had to be taken by aides, as Reagan was still in bed. Deaver explained, “... if it was me, if I was about to become president of the United States, I don’t think I’d still be asleep at nine o’clock on the morning of my swearing in.” For more of Deaver’s recollections regarding that morning, please see Haynes Johnson, *Sleepwalking Through History: America in the Reagan Years* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 26. For more on the Iranian hostage crisis see, David Farber, *Taken Hostage: The Iran Hostage Crisis and America’s First Encounter with Radical Islam* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2006).

⁴ Dinesh D’Souza, *Ronald Reagan: How an Ordinary Man Became an Extraordinary Leader* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 34. Political pundits later dubbed the Carter’s words the “Malaise Speech” even though Carter never used the word “malaise.” Literature often misquotes the speech and includes the word.

Reagan. Born to an alcoholic, shoe-selling father⁵ in 1911 Illinois, Reagan derived from his mother an uninhibited nature of optimism and a “talent for happiness.”⁶ It was if Reagan was a “real-life Gatsby,” whom Fitzgerald declared preserved an “extraordinary gift for hope.”⁷ Reagan often exploited this characteristic as an attack against Carter during the 1980 presidential campaign. During a speech in Kokomo, Indiana, Reagan explained that during his travels across America he “found a longing among our people for hope, a longing for a belief in ourselves and the vision that gave birth to this nation. . . . Jimmy Carter would have us believe that this dream is over . . . or at least in need of some kind of drastic change.”⁸ In direct contrast to Carter’s melancholy attitude, Reagan thoroughly believed that America had a “rendezvous with destiny.”⁹ Reagan exited his eight years in office a “mythic figure,” his legacy running “continuously in everyone’s home movies of the mind.”¹⁰ Reagan critic Haynes Johnson articulated that Reagan was “cocky without arrogance, wisecracking, and fun-loving” and that he “appeared to embody what the country identified as American virtues: informality humor, patriotism.

⁵ Reagan often noted that his father had the “Irish disease.”

⁶ George Will, “How Reagan Changed America,” *Newsweek*, 9 January 1989.

⁷ D’Souza, 36.

⁸ Elizabeth Drew, *Portrait of An Election: The 1980 Presidential Campaign* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), 268.

⁹ Reagan first used this phrase during a 27 October 1964 televised speech known as “A Time for Choosing” in support of Republican Presidential Candidate Barry Goldwater. Reagan borrowed the “rendezvous with destiny” ideology directly from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who used the phrase in his 27 June 1936 acceptance speech for the renomination for the presidency. Reagan’s borrowing of FDR’s later became ironic when the media dissected Reagan’s foreign policy as attempting to rollback FDR’s “New Deal.” Reagan argued that, in fact, he was trying to repair the damage he felt was created by Lyndon Johnson’s “Great Society.”

¹⁰ C. Stephen Jaeger, *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 24.

He had played the part so well so many times [in Hollywood] that it was hard to separate role from reality.”¹¹ Two events in during Reagan’s terms further concreted his mythic position in American annals. The assassination attempt just nine weeks after his inauguration elevated “Reagan into a place in the affections of his fellow citizens that he never lost during his years as president.”¹² The other – happening four months later – was his firing of 11,600 air traffic controllers for walking from their position in strike. Johnson argued that “it was such a move of boldness and decisiveness that he was henceforth seen not as an engaging actor playing a president but as the kind of leader the country longed for and thought it had lost: a strong president, willing to take unpopular risks to achieve what he believed to be in the best public interest.”¹³

After graduating from Eureka College with a degree in economics, Reagan worked as a sports broadcaster before moving to Hollywood where he appeared in over fifty films, including *King’s Row*, *Bedtime for Bonzo*, and *Knute Rockne – All American* (for which he forever earned the nickname “the Gipper”). Reagan’s term as the President of the Screen Actors Guild during the era of McCarthyism left two ineradicable impressions on the New Deal Democrat: taxes were much too high and “communists were a real and determined threat to liberty.”¹⁴

¹¹ Haynes Johnson, *Sleepwalking Through History: America in the Reagan Years* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991), 41. Brackets mine.

¹² Ibid, 153.

¹³ Ibid, 153-154.

¹⁴ Andrew E. Busch, *Reagan’s Victory: The Presidential Election of 1980 and the Ride of the Right* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 48. It bears mentioning that during his time as an

Reagan's campaign strategy was largely based on three core concepts: (1.) the idea of "peace through strength" in regard to the Soviet Union; (2.) a widely-stated promise of a 30-percent income tax cut, a prerogative of Reagan's "supply side economics" belief; (3.) a move to ensure governmental policies integrated "traditional and commonsense values."¹⁵ Carter's camp, realizing that Reagan was finding unexpected success, utilized the media to highlight many of Reagan's political gaffes. For example, Carter grilled Reagan in the media for declaring that the American economy was in the midst of a depression, stating that it exemplified just "how little he knows."¹⁶ In typical Reagan style, the Presidential candidate turned a Carter offensive into a memorable campaign moment when he responded: "A recession is when your neighbor loses his job. A depression is when you lose yours. And recovery is when Jimmy Carter loses his."¹⁷

However, perhaps Reagan's most crowning achievement during his time in office was not the effect of "Reaganomics" on the economy, but his management of the Cold War. From Reagan's election in 1981 until late 1983, the administration espoused a

actor and before President Kennedy's tax cuts, Reagan found himself in the 91st percentile of the tax bracket.

¹⁵ D'Souza, 82.

¹⁶ Earl Black and Merle Black, *The Rise of Southern Republicans* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003), 213.

¹⁷ Ibid. Various scholars maintain that prior to large national exposure during the debate, the majority of the country viewed Reagan as a "hard-edged kind of guy." However, Reagan's often light-hearted and down-to-earth approach proved otherwise. For instance, Reagan's now infamous "there you go again" response reassured America of Reagan's confidence. For more, see Gerald Gardner, *All the Presidents' Wits* (New York: William Morrow, 1986).

definitive hardline stance on all matters communist. No longer would American foreign policy be based on “soft” ideas such as human rights – such as it was under Carter – but it would move back to the core tenants of the Cold War: strength and power.¹⁸ This is no more evident than in Reagan’s desire to regroup the nation’s military to match the strength of the Soviets’ military might. Moreover, Reagan returned to the Cold War policies of “us versus them,” “good versus evil,” and “democracy versus communism.” Moderated under the Carter administration, the hardline rhetoric used by Reagan again reawakened Cold War anxieties in the Soviet Union.¹⁹

3.2 The Early Brezhnev Correspondence

Leonid Brezhnev, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1964 until his death in 1982, became a member of the Central Committee in a time that ultimately hardened him. From 1934 to 1939, Joseph Stalin conducted the ‘Great Purge.’ Its terror reached its climax in 1936 and 1938 when “1.6 million people were arrested, and up to 3.6 million individuals were in prisons, labor camps, and internal exile settlements.”²⁰

¹⁸ The concept of “soft” and “hard” power in relation to American foreign policy is discussed sufficiently in Joseph S. Nye Jr., *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World’s Only Superpower Can’t Go It Alone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹⁹ Joyce P. Kaufman, *A Concise History of U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Roman & Littlefield Publishers, 2010), 117.

²⁰ John M. Thompson, *Russia and the Soviet Union: An Historical Introduction from the Kievan State to the Present* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2009), 256.

Stalin's purges did not exclude the Communist Party itself. Seeking those that had committed crimes against the state – a rather ambiguous charge – Stalin ordered nearly 40 percent of the Communist Party members arrested. Most of the 1934 delegates to the Seventieth Congress Party were shot. Further, “of the 139 members of the 1934 Central Committee, 110 were killed or driven to suicide.” Soviet historian John Thompson states that the empty seats left behind by Stalin's purge were “quickly filled by a rough, less-educated, ambitious new generation willing to knuckle under Stalin.”²¹ Of these new Congress members stood Brezhnev. The new Soviet leader, catapulted into power after the removal of Nikita Khrushchev, is portrayed as the “blandest and most one-dimensional of all Soviet leaders.”²² Brezhnev was equally unsure of himself. He criticized himself for having never dealt with foreign policy, stating, “... here I am, sitting in the Kremlin and looking at the world only via papers that reach my desk.”²³ It was a peculiar lack of confidence for a man whose lapels were filled with medals from his service in World War II. Brezhnev, then 35, found himself on the front lines at Dnepropetrovsk when the Germans launched their attack in August 1941. After being forced to retreat after ten days of resistance, Brezhnev stayed with the troops and further assisted in their evacuation across the Dnieper River. He also saw later action in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary.²⁴

²¹ Ibid.

²² Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War From Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 201.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Olga A. Narkiewicz, *Soviet Leaders: From the Cult of Personality to Collective Rule* (Brighton, Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books, 1986), 91.

It was this upbringing in the Communist Party that Brezhnev communicated with Reagan. The embittered relationship between Brezhnev and Reagan assisted in the materialization of a foreign policy stalemate between the two leaders. It was this stalemate that largely persisted – even as Soviet leadership was continuously in flux – until Reagan’s change of heart in late 1983. Brezhnev was the first of the two to put pen to paper. The letter, received by the White House on 6 March 1981, opened:

I consider it necessary to turn to you concerning the most vital problems that are raised by the present international situation. I suppose you are aware that the Congress of our Party, which recently took place in Moscow, devoted paramount attention to the analysis and evaluation of the international situation; as well as to the practical conclusions stemming from this. The question was, what should be done in order to preserve peace and to ensure for present and future generations the most basic right of each person – the right to life. This is the essence of the decisions that were taken, which will determine the foreign policy course of the Soviet Union in the years ahead.²⁵

Further, the letter touched on the Soviets creating “numerous proposals for reducing the threat of war and for increasing international security.” Brezhnev noted the vital necessity of a “safe, peaceful future” and that the Soviet Union was continuously creating “new, large initiatives” in order to “restrain the arms race, deepen détente, [and] strengthen peace.”²⁶ Alexander Haig, Reagan’s Secretary of State, felt Brezhnev’s letter did not “signal any modifications” of the Soviet system and that it only served as

²⁵ Leonid Brezhnev to Ronald Reagan, March 6, 1981, folder “Head of State Correspondence Jan – June 1981 (1/2),” box 64, John Matlock Files, RRL.

²⁶ Ibid.

“another step in the ongoing Soviet diplomatic and propaganda campaign” to further contrast what the Soviets felt as American “footdragging” in repairing East/West relations.²⁷ As well, the administration considered the letter as a Soviet attempt to put the “U.S. on the spot” and served as an opportunity for the Kremlin to achieve peace talks on their own terms.²⁸ The socialist newspaper, *Pravda*, succinctly summed up the Soviet position on attempting to place the Reagan administration in a precarious situation, writing, “the captains of Western policy will sooner or later have to heed the inexorable realities of our time, the might community of socialist nations and the movement of peoples for social progress and national independence which is gathering momentum. No one is going to turn back the wheel of history.”²⁹

Reagan had no reason to believe that the “wheel of history” was turning towards a worldwide socialist revolution. Not believing a revolution was on the verge of taking place, Reagan felt no pressure to enter peace talks hastily, thus negating his strategy of “peace through strength.” The President’s response to Brezhnev’s first entreaty was as direct and unforgiving as his foreign policy. Reagan argued that the elements of “mutual confidence and trust” were missing because of the “policy and actions of the Soviet Union.” In particular, Reagan insisted that the “... USSR’s unrelenting and comprehensive military build-up over the past decade” and the “Soviet Union’s pursuit of

²⁷ Memorandum, Alexander Haig to Ronald Reagan, nd., folder “Head of State Correspondence Jan – June 1981 (1/2),” box 64, John Matlock Files, RRL.

²⁸ Setting for March 6 Brezhnev Letter, nd., folder “Head of State Correspondence Jan – June 1981 (1/2),” box 64, John Matlock Files, RRL.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 2.

unilateral advantage in other parts of the world and its repeated resort to the direct and indirect use of force” were the sole harbingers of discontent between the two countries.³⁰ Reagan’s letter made it clear that the “prospects for improved East-West relations ... will primarily [be] a function of Soviet restraint.”³¹ Additionally, Reagan, without provocation in Brezhnev’s letter, addressed the brewing issue of the Polish Solidarity Movement. Directly after informing the Brezhnev that a major source of international tension was due to the continued Military presence in Afghanistan, the President warned him that any “Soviet intervention in Poland would have a profoundly negative and lasting impact on US-Soviet relations and on the East/West relationship in general.”³² In closing, Reagan suggested a “traditional meeting” at the upcoming United Nations gathering and marked it as a chance to “deepen” the “bilateral dialogue” between the two countries as well as using it as a measuring stick for the future of building a “better and happier relationship.”³³

The growing rift over which country was at fault for the volatile state of affairs continued to grow as letters changed hands through the summer of 1981. The Reagan administration received on 15 October 1981 a reply from Brezhnev regarding a 22

³⁰ Ronald Reagan to Leonid Brezhnev, nd., folder “Head of State Correspondence Jan – June 1981 (1/2),” box 64, John Matlock Files, RRL.

³¹ Memorandum, Response to Brezhnev’s letter, Alexander Haig to Ronald Reagan, March 25, 1981, folder “Head of State Correspondence Jan – June 1981 (1/2),” box 64, John Matlock Files, RRL.

³² Ronald Reagan to Leonid Brezhnev, nd., folder “Head of State Correspondence Jan – June 1981 (1/2),” box 64, John Matlock Files, RRL.

³³ Ibid, 5.

September 1981 letter from Reagan.³⁴ In the letter, Brezhnev quickly called it “regrettable” that Reagan again attempted to deflect the entirety of the blame for the tension between the two superpowers on the Soviet Union. Brezhnev was also agitated by Reagan’s insistence that the relationship could only improve after Soviet behavior changed, writing, “... to proceed on this premise is to steer clearly the whole matter toward a deadlock.” Brezhnev countered Reagan’s belief that a Soviet change in behavior was needed in order to restore trust and confidence by arguing that the Soviet Union was not the sole country with “serious and legitimate objections ... with the United States and its policy.”³⁵ Further, Brezhnev reasoned that the American government lacked any moral or ethical authority to decry Soviet actions when the American government itself “... perceives its interests everywhere and in everything.” Brezhnev continued, informing Reagan that only once the United States abandoned its “double standard” would there be an opportunity for the “stabilization of the world situation.”³⁶ Lastly, the letter indicated an unsettled feeling on the Soviet part towards Reagan’s “incessant campaign” regarding the “so-called Soviet military threat.” Brezhnev argued that these “fantastic fables” had traces of reality, saying that a belief that any country can be victorious in a “nuclear duel” was nothing more than a

³⁴ In Reagan’s 22 September letter, he again placed the onus for the world tensions squarely on the Soviet Union. The purpose of the letter, as later stated by National Security Advisor Richard Allen, was to clarify to Brezhnev the stance of American policy towards the Soviet Union before the beginning of the United Nations General Assembly. Dispelling a Soviet claim that communication was nonexistent between the two countries, Reagan noted that there *was* communication – but the Soviets simply did not like what the Reagan administration had to say.

³⁵ Leonid Brezhnev to Ronald Reagan, 15 October 1981, folder “Head of State Correspondence Jan – June 1981 (1/2),” box 64, John Matlock Files, RRL.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

calculation of “insanity.” Brezhnev signed off on the letter only after wishing the exchanges to serve as a medium for “establishing a better understanding on the key issues of Soviet-American relations.”³⁷

In his 17 November 1981 reply, Reagan immediately rebutted Brezhnev’s claim that Soviet actions should have no bearing on US-Soviet relations, writing:

Your letter of October 15 makes it clear once again how profound are the differences in our respective assessments of the causes of the major sources of tension in the world. I find it difficult to accept your declaration that Soviet actions in other parts of the world must have no bearing on our relations. Soviet actions are having a direct and adverse impact on American interests in many parts of the world. As I said in my letter to you of September 22, Soviet resort to direct and indirect use of force in regional conflicts is a matter of deep concern to us as is the continued build up of military strength beyond the need for self defense.³⁸

Reagan then entered a discussion regarding Soviet action in Afghanistan and Soviet concern over possible American interference in Cuba. Reagan assumed that the Soviet Union shared the desire for a “non-aligned, independent Afghanistan, free of any foreign military presence and guaranteed against any outside interference.”³⁹ To that end, Reagan argued the only obstacle constricting such a reality was the “complete withdrawal of

³⁷ Ibid, 7.

³⁸ Ronald Reagan to Leonid Brezhnev, November 17, 1981, folder “Head of State Correspondence, US/USSR, Nov 1981,” box 64, John Matlock Files, RRL.

³⁹ Ibid.

Soviet forces ... at the earliest possible date.”⁴⁰ In what amounted to a brief window of reconciliation, Reagan calmed Brezhnev’s suspicions of an American invasion of Cuba by assuring the Soviet leader that the United States did “not seek to interfere with Cuba’s independence” nor was the country currently “interfering in Cuba’s internal affairs.” However, Reagan did foreshadow coming American foreign policy interventions, when informing Brezhnev that he did “find entirely unacceptable Cuba’s unremitting efforts to export its revolution by fomenting violent insurgencies and terrorism against legitimate governments in Central America.”⁴¹ At the end of the letter, Reagan again placed the onus of world change on the Soviet Union, charging “if the Soviet Union is prepared to move forward in these areas of genuine concern to the United States and its Allies, you will find me a ready partner.”⁴²

Reagan’s National Security Council assured the President that his letter allowed the Soviets to have a “clear understanding” of the American approach. Further, the letters clarified the “specific concerns” the administration held, as well as attesting to the ideal that improved relations were based only on “Soviet actions, not words, over the coming months.”⁴³ It was insisted, however, that despite Reagan’s best attempts, the

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid, 2. Reagan’s administration later assisted various groups in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Grenada, and the Falklands to fend of communist incursion. For more see, William LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard: The United States in Central America, 1977-1992* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

⁴² Ibid, 3. Aside from the continuing Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, other “genuine concerns” mentioned by Reagan in the letter included strategic arms reduction and the military imbalance of intermediate-range nuclear weapons.

⁴³ Memorandum, Alexander Haig to Ronald Reagan, November 9, 1981, “Head of State Correspondence Jan – June 1981 (1/2),” box 64, John Matlock Files, RRL.

Soviet Union still considered “terms that require Moscow to change its foreign policy” wholly unacceptable.⁴⁴

Brezhnev fully validated the National Security Council beliefs in his 1 December 1981 reply. After two opening paragraphs espousing finding “common ground” and “eliminating the threat of nuclear weapons,” Brezhnev scolded Reagan, writing, “... frankly, the considerations advanced in your letter on specific issues are, to put it mildly, very far from the objective reality.” Reagan’s argument from his first letter to Brezhnev concerning the Soviet Union’s “unrelenting military build up” was, to the Soviet leader, an incident of “double book-keeping whereby in counting the Soviet arms in question their numbers are made to look many times higher, and – conversely – when it comes to the US, such numbers are drastically understated.”⁴⁵ In an effort to snub Reagan’s conviction that Soviet action was stalling reconciliation, Brezhnev informed the President of the USSR’s withdraw “from Central Europe [some] 20,000 troops and 1,000 tanks, while the US, on the contrary, added tens of thousands of men to its troops in Europe.” Brezhnev, insinuating that Reagan lived in a world of fantasy, stated that those numbers presented the “actual state of affairs in real life.”⁴⁶ It was Brezhnev’s first attempt of countering Reagan’s claims with substantiated facts. In doing so, it led Brezhnev to propose to President Reagan a vital question regarding the shaky components of world affairs: “... the question is which side is lacking in constructiveness and practical

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Leonid Brezhnev to Ronald Reagan, December 1, 1981, folder “Head of State Correspondence, US/USSR, December 1981 (2/2),” box 64, John Matlock Files, RRL.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

steps?”⁴⁷ Secretary of State Haig considered Brezhnev’s choice of words the “harshest Presidential level communication” received from the Kremlin in “recent years.” As well, the State Department analyzed the letter as “uncompromisingly tough in rejecting” the American desire for Soviet change.⁴⁸

As well, Brezhnev’s approach to the rapidly evolving situation in Poland caused great alarm to the State Department. In the same memorandum to the President, Haig suggested several unilateral actions the administration could take against the Kremlin in order to “deter the Soviets from brining about a major escalation” or to “impose punitive sanctions against Moscow following direct Soviet intervention.”⁴⁹ Of the suggestions prompted to the President, the most broad consisted of a sweeping economic sanction against the USSR. The State Department desired to “impose a total trade embargo, expel all Soviet commercial representatives, ban all Soviet fishing in U.S. water, discourage tourist travels to the USSR, suspend Aeroflot service to the U.S. and end Soviet maritime access to U.S. ports, suspend negotiations on economic matters, and pressure U.S. banks to curtail credits.” Finally, the State Department urged the President to “carry through” with his “threats,” and not take any “flabby actions.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Memorandum, Alexander M. Haig to Ronald Reagan, December 26, 1981, folder “NSC Meetings 12/28/1981 Soviet Union,” box 3, Richard Pipes Files, RRL.

⁴⁹ Poland: Possible Actions Against the USSR, State Department to Ronald Reagan, nd., folder “NSC Meetings 12/28/1981 Soviet Union,” box 3, Richard Pipes Files, RRL.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Following Brezhnev's fundamental question, the letter correspondence between the two leaders transitioned into a regular exchange regarding the Poland situation, the plight of seven Christians who sought refuge in the American Embassy in Moscow, the crisis in Lebanon, and human rights as a whole. Reagan failed to mention any potential sanctions or actions against the USSR for its participation in the Poland movement. The letters arriving from Brezhnev continued to prod the United States to take a share of the responsibility for the current state of world affairs. One such letter in late 1982 concerning the massacre of Palestinians in West Beirut, in which Brezhnev apportioned "a certain share of the responsibility to those who could but did not prevent what has been committed by Tel Aviv,"⁵¹ was yet another example of the Soviet leader producing clear references of where he thought the Americans were lacking in rectifying the world political order.

Reagan's correspondence with the Soviet leadership was most certainly not a *laissez-faire* affair. Even with the drafts of responses going through multiple departments and multiple hands, a central strategy directed the general thrust of the communication towards the Soviet Union. Richard Pipes, the former director of Harvard's Russian Research Center from 1968 and 1973 – and a member of Reagan's National Security Council as the Director of East European and Soviet Affairs – was the chief author of Cold War strategy and policy. Born into an assimilated Jewish family in Poland, Pipes went on to earn his PhD from Harvard University. Pipes' first foray into American political work was during his tenure with "Team B," a constructed group of civilian

⁵¹ Leonid Brezhnev to Ronald Reagan, September 15, 1982, folder "Head of State Correspondence, US/USSR August – December 1982 (2/2)," box 64, John Matlock Files, RRL.

experts and retired military officers whose task it was to evaluate and analyze the threats posed by the Soviet Union to the United States. As indicated by Pipes' later writing, "Team B" found that the Central Intelligence Agency's understanding of Soviet intelligence vastly underestimated Soviet military power and largely misinterpreted Soviet strategic policies. After a brief stint in academe, Pipes transition into his role on the National Security Council, holding the position of Director of East European and Soviet Affairs. His innate distaste for the spirit of détente was not lost on Reagan who largely would have agreed when Pipes argued that détente was "inspired by intellectual indolence and based on ignorance of one's antagonist and therefore inherently inept."⁵² It was with this background and belief that Pipes authored one of the seminal building blocks for the Reagan Doctrine.

3.3 Pipes' Reagan Soviet Policy

In October of 1981, in the midst of Poland's Solidarity Movement, National Security Council member Richard Pipes presented to the Reagan administration a major paper detailing the foundation and ongoing construction of Reagan's Soviet policy. Pipes' policy for Reagan hinged on four key propositions, including Pipes' belief that communism was "inherently expansionist" and that the only way to tide such expansion of communism into the free world was to either assist in collapsing the ideology or, "at

⁵² Lori Lyn Bogle, "Pipes, Richard," *The Encyclopedia of Historians and Historical Writing* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishing, 1999), 922-923.

the very least,” to thoroughly reform it.⁵³ In regards to collapsing the ideology, Pipes believed that the “Stalinist model on which Soviet Communism ... is based” was on the precipice of a catastrophic failure brought on by multiple economic failures and “difficulties brought about by overexpansion.” As well, Pipes argued that the eventual successors of Brezhnev were likely to split into “conservative” and “reformist” factions, “the latter of which” were likely to “press for modest economic and political democratization.” Finally, the last proposition of Pipes’ paper noted that the best course of action for the United States was to “promote the reformist tendencies in the USSR” by either “encouraging pro-reform forces inside” the country or, conversely, increasing the consequences for any Soviet imperialism.⁵⁴

After presenting his scheme, Pipes laid out his overall argument and, thus, Reagan’s foreign policy towards the Soviet Union for the foreseeable future: in order to regain superiority in the Cold War, the United States needed to “exploit not so much” its own strengths, but the Soviet Union’s weaknesses. Pipes argued that “frustrating [the] adversary’s strategy and turning it against them” was an “imaginative, realistic, sustainable counter-strategy” that would sufficiently neutralize “the aggressive designs” of the USSR. In what served as Pipes’ rationale for his strategy, he explained what he considered an unobjectionable truth about the Soviet Union, and Communism in general:

⁵³ *A Reagan Soviet Policy*, Richard Pipes, October 1981, folder “Reagan Soviet Policy – October 1981,” box 3, Richard Pipes Files, RRL.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 2.

The Soviet Union decidedly is not the “vanguard of history.” Rather, it is a misbegotten experiment based on nineteenth century ideas and Russian historic experience that bears little relationship to contemporary reality, and would long have been relegated to history books were it not for Soviet bayonets and tanks. Communism has been unable to realize a single one of its stated objectives. Its symbol is the sealed frontier guarded by security personnel to ensure that no one escapes. No nation has freely adopted Communism; every nation on which it has been imposed has striven at the first opportunity to be rid of it. Communism is a pre-historic relic.⁵⁵

After stating what he believed to be the universal truth about the Soviet Union, Pipes laid out the specifics of Reagan’s political strategy for the Communist world. Primarily, Pipes urged the need for an “economic grand strategy” that allowed for maximum “political leverage” for the West and inflicted “anti-reformist” elements in the East.⁵⁶ Pipes failed to make any suggestions on how to develop such an economic strategy. Before the release of Pipes’ paper, however, the Reagan administration implemented the “peace through strength” initiative. In doing so, the administration indirectly declared “economic warfare.” That is, by forcing the Soviet Union to compete with the American military buildup, the Reagan administration was forcing Moscow to stress its economic abilities to the brink. Even if Pipes had declared a concrete economic strategy against the

⁵⁵ Ibid. Pipes also argued several other reasons for supplanting the Soviet Union. He felt that the “Brezhnev Doctrine had no basis in international law” and that it violated major international agreements, such as the United Nations Charter and the Helsinki Final Act. As well, he argued that the Soviet Union was a “superpower only in the sense that it disposes of massive arsenals of nuclear and conventional weapons.” Pipes wrote that the Soviet Union was “second rank” both economically and culturally and, because of this, the United States stood as the only “global superpower” in all three respects (economically, culturally, and militarily). Finally, Pipes appealed to those with any evidence of human dignity, comparing Communism to slavery.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 37.

Soviet Union, the White House, in favor of the measures already implemented, would have likely ignored it. To that end, Pipes and the administration largely agreed that the “theorists of détente” were largely misguided in “improving the performance of the Soviet economy as long as it adheres to the Stalinist model.”⁵⁷

Secondly, Pipes suggested the encouragement of dissent within the USSR, especially among those groups “that strive for greater democracy and human rights.” To do so, Pipes championed the deployment of propaganda and ideological warfare arguing, “propaganda will move to the forefront and become the single most effective instrument in our struggle Soviet expansionism.”⁵⁸ The message to deliver to those behind the Iron Curtain, Pipes argued, should “not seek to sell the United States and our way of life.” Pipes felt doing so was wholly unnecessary, as the citizens of Eastern Europe already possessed a “rose view” of the American condition and actually considered the prospect of doing so “insulting” to the recipients of the propaganda. Rather, Pipes insisted that the material “perform the function of a non-existent Soviet free press and inform Soviet citizens of the failures and misdeeds of their own government, of which they are the principal victims.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Ibid, 38.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 38-39.

⁵⁹ Pipes recommended that some of the material to be covered include: the immense costs of the Soviet Union’s defense programs, instances of official corruption and abuses of authority, and information about Soviet military casualties abroad, including the names of the dead, wounded, and those taken prisoner.

Thirdly, Pipes recommended that the Reagan administration “actively resist Soviet imperialism outside the Soviet Bloc.”⁶⁰ Of Pipes’ proposed ideas, the suggestion of interfering in countries such as “Angola or Cambodia” is the one most evident in Reagan’s foreign policy. Pipes immediately advocated for a “transfer of arms” to those countries fending off a Communist revolution, and that such action be completed in a “clandestine fashion.” It was also made explicitly clear in the paper that unless the “vital interests” of the American Republic was endangered, that there was no need “to send U.S. combat troops to contain Communist aggression.”⁶¹

Pipes concluded his manifesto by summing up the “underlying morality of Communists.” In doing so, Pipes argued that it was defined as: “When I am weak, I appeal to the sense of fairness because this is your principle; when I am strong, I appeal to power because that is my principle.”⁶² Reagan immediately indicated his agreement with Pipes’ paper and quickly began to incorporate Pipes’ thoughts, beliefs, and arguments into his own public rhetoric. For example, a June 1982 speech in Westminster Hall in London bore witness to Reagan orating:

In an ironic sense Karl Marx was right. We are witnessing today a great revolutionary crisis, a crisis where the demands of the economic order are conflicting directly with those of the political order. But the crisis is happening not in the free, non-Marxist West, but in the home of Marxist-Leninism, the Soviet Union. It is the Soviet Union that runs against the

⁶⁰ Pipes, 41.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid, 46.

tide of history by denying human freedom and human dignity to its citizens. It also is in deep economic difficulty ... While we must be cautious about forcing the pace of things, we must not hesitate to declare our ultimate objectives and to take concrete actions to move toward them. The objective I propose is quite simple to state: to foster the infrastructure of democracy, the system of a free press, unions, political parties, universities, which allows a people to choose their own way to develop their own culture, to reconcile their own differences through peaceful means. This is not cultural imperialism, it is providing the means for genuine self-determination and protection for diversity.⁶³

Pipes' writings and beliefs on the Soviet Union – and communism as a whole – played a powerful and deciding factor in the creation of National Security Decision Directive 75 and the formation of The Reagan Doctrine.

3.4 NSDD 75 & The Reagan Doctrine

Reagan's abhorrence of communism was not a political façade – it was a deep-seeded and personal disavowing of all that the socialist order embroiled. It was his anticommunism belief that drove Reagan into politics in the first place. As the President of the Screen Actors Guild during the McCarthy era, Reagan became entangled in the fight over the communist influence in Hollywood. As President of the Screen Actors Guild, Reagan at one time “spent seven months ... meeting communists and communist-influenced people across a table in almost daily sessions.”⁶⁴ It was in these sessions that

⁶³ Steven F. Hayward, *The Age of Reagan: The Conservative Counterrevolution, 1980-1989* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2010), 255.

⁶⁴ James Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 18.

the nucleus for Reagan's distrust for the communist culture was cultivated, writing in a 1960 letter to *Playboy* publisher Hugh Hefner: "I, like you, will defend the right of any American to openly practice and preach any political philosophy from monarchy to anarchy. But this is not the case with regard to the communist. He [a communist] is bound by party discipline to *deny* he is a communist so that he can by subversion and steal impose on an unwilling people the rule of the International Communist Party which is in fact the government of Soviet Russia."⁶⁵ Reagan came to believe that the Soviets faced "serious political ... deficiencies that could be used to the West's advantage."⁶⁶ During the 1980 campaign, Reagan espoused his beliefs about the ideological weaknesses and his view of the absurdity of communism, arguing:

The greatest fallacy of the Lenin-Marxist philosophy is that it is the "wave of the future." Everything about it is a primitive as tribal rule; compulsion in place of free initiative; coercion in place of law; piracy in place of trade, and empire building for the benefit of a chosen few at the expense of the many. We have seen nothing like it since feudalism.⁶⁷

Reagan's election as President provided a new beginning in Cold War relations – a prospect the Soviets were quite aware of. Shortly after the 1980 election concluded, the Foreign Broadcast Information Service was providing the White House with continuing updates on the position of various Soviet leaders. For instance, Soviet Premier Nikolay Tikhonov argued that the Soviet relationship with the United States could improve only

⁶⁵ Ibid. Brackets mine. Emphasize in original text.

⁶⁶ Francis H. Marlo, *Planning Reagan's War: Conservative Strategists and America's Cold War Victory* (Dulles, Virginia: Potomac Books, 2012), 136.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

on the basis of “equality, noninterference in internal affairs, and not causing harm to the security” of either country.⁶⁸ General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, at a Kremlin dinner speech on 18 November 1980, remarked about Reagan’s victorious campaign:

Much in the development of the international situation will, of course, depend on the position of the United States. A new president has now been elected there. I shall not dwell on what was said by him and his supporters and opponents in the heat of the election struggle. I can only state with full responsibility that any constructive steps by the U.S. Administration in the field of Soviet-American relations and urgent world problems will meet with positive response on our part.⁶⁹

In its indirect appeals to President-elect Reagan, the Politburo did nothing but attempt to elongate the long-held stance of détente. The desire of “noninterference in internal affairs” and “equality” was nothing more than a carry over of the longstanding American approach to Cold War affairs. Reagan’s campaign and tenure as California governor made it overwhelmingly clear that maintaining the status quo of détente was simply not going to happen once his administration took over Washington. Reagan held a wildly differing view of how the Cold War was supposed to end in the absence of détente: “we

⁶⁸ *Soviet Treatment of President Reagan – November 1980 – May 1984*, Special Memorandum from the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 1 June 1984, folder “USSR Propaganda, Communications, Media, etc (4/6),” box 33, John Matlock Files, RRL.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* Reagan certainly said plenty about the Soviet Union during his campaign. However, one particular Soviet gaffe during his stay in office is routinely retold: while warming up for his weekly radio address, Reagan remarked, “My fellow Americans, I’m pleased to tell you today that I’ve signed legislation that will outlaw Russia forever. We begin bombing in five minutes.” Reagan did not realize that his microphone was incorrectly set to live during the sound check.

win, they lose.”⁷⁰ In order to obtain this ideological victory over the Soviet Union and the socialist order, Reagan and his administration enacted policies and initiatives that became known as The Reagan Doctrine.

The impetus of The Reagan Doctrine was NSDD 75, largely drafted by Richard Pipes and built upon the foundation he crafted in his earlier Soviet strategy paper that Reagan drew anti-communism rhetoric from. The basis of NSDD 75 was rather straight forward: “U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union will consist of three elements: external resistance to Soviet imperialism; internal pressure on the USSR to weaken the sources of Soviet imperialism; and negotiations to eliminate, on the basis of strict reciprocity, outstanding disagreements.”⁷¹ Specifically, NSDD 75 focused on two major tasks for the United States to undertake. First, NSDD 75 aimed:

To contain and over time reverse Soviet expansionism by competing effectively on a sustained basis with the Soviet Union in all international arenas – particularly in the overall military balance and in geographical regions of priority concern to the United States. This will remain the primary focus of U.S. policy toward the USSR.⁷²

Not only did concepts of NSDD 75 aim to confront and challenge communism in those areas on the verge of coming under the Soviet sphere of influence, it aimed to stimulate change within the Soviet Union itself:

⁷⁰ James Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 16.

⁷¹ National Security Decision Directive Number 75, 17 January 1983, Executive Secretariat, National Security Council Files, Box 4, folder “NSDD 75 (1),” RRL.

⁷² Ibid.

To promote, within the narrow limits available to us, the process of change in the Soviet Union toward a more pluralistic political and economic system in which the power of the privileged ruling elite is gradually reduce. The U.S. recognizes that Soviet aggressiveness has deep roots in the internal system, and that relations with the USSR should therefore take into account whether or not they help to strengthen this system and its capacity to engage in aggression.⁷³

Functionally, NSDD 75 aimed for the United States to “modernize its military forces – both nuclear and conventional – so that Soviet leaders perceive that the U.S. administration is determined never to accept a second place or a deteriorating military posture.”⁷⁴ As well, it was deemed vital that the “U.S. must rebuild the credibility of its commitment to resist Soviet encroachment on U.S. interests and those of its Allies and friends, and to support effectively those Third World states that are willing to resist Soviet pressures or oppose Soviet initiatives hostile to the United States, or are special targets of Soviet policy.”⁷⁵ Further, it was determined in NSDD 75 that American policy would “seek to limit the destabilizing activities of Soviet Third World allies and clients. It is a further objective to weaken and, where possible, undermine the existing links between them and the Soviet Union. U.S. policy will include active efforts to encourage democratic movements and forces to bring about political change inside these countries.”⁷⁶

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 2.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 4.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 5.

Reagan wasted little in incorporating elements of The Reagan Doctrine into American government policy, for example, his “peace through strength” initiative. Reagan largely shunned the belief that peace was nothing more than the lack of war. He also rejected the idealist philosophy that peace was a policy, arguing, “... peace is a goal, not a policy” and that “lasting peace is what we hope for at the end of our journey; it doesn’t describe the steps we must take nor the paths we should follow to reach that goal.”⁷⁷ Reagan’s “peace through strength” initiative focused on not only building the American military into an overwhelming power, but also conveying an unrelenting assurance that such power would be used if necessary. Reagan backed his pledge of using force if necessary as early as the campaign for 1980, saying, “no one wants to use atomic weapons, but the enemy should go to sleep every night in fear that we *could* use them.”⁷⁸

The Reagan administration felt that while the Soviets constructed a military superpower, the United States built down – the result of which was a “dangerous military imbalance.”⁷⁹ Reagan declared America’s military depletion a “window of vulnerability” and argued, “that the truth of the matter is that on balance, the Soviet Union does have a

⁷⁷ Elizabeth Edwards Spalding, “The Origins and Meaning of Reagan’s Cold War,” in *The Reagan Presidency: Assessing the Man and His Legacy*, ed. Paul Kengor and Peter Schweizer (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 58.

⁷⁸ Peter Schweizer, *Victory: The Reagan Administration’s Secret Strategy That Hastened the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1994), 17. Italics mine.

⁷⁹ Fischer, 21.

definite margin of superiority.”⁸⁰ In his effort to increase American military strength, Reagan proposed the largest peacetime military budget in the country’s history. The Reagan administration allocated an astonishing \$33.8 billion in extra military budget funding and proposed an additional 7 percent per year increase in military spending during their first term in the White House, totaling over one trillion dollars. The unprecedented amount of funding backed the military’s strategic forces, combat readiness, force mobility, and general needs.⁸¹ As well, the surge of finances into the military budget allowed for the construction of several thousand combat aircraft, the construction of nearly 600 Naval ships, and the development of the B-1 stealth bomber that President Carter cancelled during his administration.⁸² The immense military buildup did not, however, serve as a vehicle to reverse by force Communist control of Eastern Europe. Rather, conservatives argued, an unrivaled American military would devalue the Soviets’ main strategic asset in the Cold War. Additionally, by matching Soviet military might, the American government would be in a capable position to focus on “political, economic, and spiritual” conversations and compromises with the Soviet Union.⁸³ More importantly: forcing the Soviet Union to match growing American military might was capable of forcing the collapse of an already fragile Soviet economy.

⁸⁰ Ronald Reagan, Press Conference, 20 January 1982, *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* (hereafter *WCPD*), 18:714.

⁸¹ Richard Halloran, “Reagan to Request \$38B Increase in Military Outlays,” *New York Times*, 5 March 1981.

⁸² D’Souza, 143.

⁸³ Edmund A. Walsh, *Total Empire: The Roots and Progress of World Communism* (Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Publishing, 2010), 209.

In March of 1983, President Reagan took his “peace through strength” initiative and desire to fiscally collapse the Soviet Union a step even further. On 23 March 1983, after a consultation with his Joint Chiefs of Staff, Reagan announced his decision to “embark on a long-range research-and-development effort to counter the threat of Soviet ballistic missiles and to make ... nuclear weapons ... impotent and obsolete.”⁸⁴ The beginning of the effort was born on 31 July 1979 during Reagan’s visit to the NORAD headquarters near Colorado Springs, Colorado. During a discussion with General James Hill, Reagan was dismayed to learn that there was nothing that could be done to stop a nuclear missile fired by the Soviet Union.⁸⁵ Even with Reagan’s rapid military growth, the fate of the world still rested on the laurels of Mutually Assured Destruction – or, the immediate firing of American nuclear missiles once a Soviet first strike was verified to be airborne. Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative – or “Star Wars” – was the most far-reaching and expensive portion of Reagan’s “peace through strength” movement. No longer would Mutually Assured Destruction drive the Cold War. Reagan was now proposing a system that would shoot down incoming Soviet missiles and “thus protect the United States from a nuclear attack.”⁸⁶ Even if “Star Wars” was a fabrication of scientific nonsense, the Soviets were sufficiently impressed “by U.S. technological capabilities.” Anatoly Dobrynin, the Soviet ambassador to the United States from 1962 to 1986, recalled that the Soviet leadership viewed Reagan’s SDI initiative was a “real threat” as it

⁸⁴ Frances Fitzgerald, *Way Out There In The Blue: Reagan, Star Wars and the End of the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 19.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁸⁶ Mann, 31.

had the potential to render the entire Soviet nuclear program useless.⁸⁷ Indeed, the Moscow newspaper *Izvestiya* admitted that Reagan's proposed SDI program was likely to "impose on us an even more ruinous arms race."⁸⁸

Reagan also stayed true to his desire to reverse Soviet expansionism as outlined in NSDD 75. By the 1980s, the United States had grown concerned about the ongoing expansion of Soviet influence in the Caribbean. The President had growing concerns regarding the Caribbean since attending a conference in Barbados in late 1982. Shortly after, in a March 1983 address, Reagan proclaimed: "the rapid buildup of Grenada's military potential is unrelated to any conceivable threat to this island country of under 100,000 ... The Soviet-Cuban militarization of Grenada, in short, can only be seen as a power projection into the region." A bloody coup by the People's Revolutionary Government in Grenada in October 1983 reaffirmed Reagan's belief, and was viewed by Reagan as a direct Marxist threat to both American security and interest. On 25 October 1983, approximately 2,000 United States armed forces launched a campaign against the soldiers of the Marxist regime who had staged the earlier coup. The military campaign lasted three days before American superiority in numbers, power, and technology overwhelmed the revolutionaries. The Grenada operation was of vast significance to the Reagan Doctrine – it served as the first American "effort to restore democracy to a communist country."⁸⁹

⁸⁷ D'Souza, 179.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ D'Souza, 155.

President Reagan sought to exploit the weaknesses of the Soviet Union through the political, economic, and military strength of the United States. However, a series of events in late 1983 led Reagan to give a nationally televised address that seemed to counter everything the President had done in his first three years in office to bring the ultimate demise to the Soviet Union. The speech, it seemed, indicated that Reagan had “blinked first” in the Cold War conflict.

3.5 Morning In The Soviet Union

Political scientist Beth Fischer argued that a series of three events in the fall of 1983 signaled to President Ronald Reagan that American approach to the Soviet Union was in dire need of change, or else nuclear war would inescapable.⁹⁰ The experience of the three events led Reagan to alter his Soviet policy in January of 1984, providing the administration a unique opportunity to employ the Olympics use as mediator in bettering American-Soviet relations.

In the early morning of 1 September 1983, Korean Airlines flight 007 departed New York and, after a short layover for fuel in Anchorage, departed for its final destination, Seoul. In a disastrous mistake, the pilots of the aircraft incorrectly set the plane’s automatic navigational system causing the aircraft, unknowingly to the crew, to veer over three hundred miles into Soviet airspace. In a case of cruel luck, hours before the passenger airliner entered enemy airspace, the Soviet Union was tracking an American intelligence plane which was operating near the current flight path of KAL

⁹⁰ Fischer, 189.

007. The Kremlin was dismayed as KAL 007 – believing it to be the same American intelligence aircraft – neared the sensitive Soviet military base near Vladivostok. A Soviet fighter jet scrambled to intercept the out-of-place jet. All efforts to identify the aircraft failed, including the Soviet pilot firing warning shots, dropping flares, and attempting to make radio contact with the astray pilots of KAL 007. Acting on the orders of the Kremlin, the Soviet pilot – Lieutenant Colonel Gennadi Osipovich – fired upon KAL 007, killing all 269 people on board, including 61 American citizens. Reagan immediately christened the Soviet action an “act of inhuman brutality.”⁹¹ Four days after the incident, Reagan spoke to a shocked and outraged nation:

But, despite the savagery of their crime, the universal reaction against it, and the evidence of their complicity, the Soviets still refuse to tell the truth. They have persistently refused to admit that their pilot fired on the Korean aircraft. Indeed, they have not even told the Russian people that a plane was shot down. The Soviet Government calls the whole thing an accident. I call it murder.⁹²

⁹¹ Reagan, 582-584.

⁹² Presidential Television Address: Flight 007, Sept. 5, 1983, folder “KAL 007 (2),” box 28, John F. Matlock Files, RRL.



Figure 3.1 - Reagan delivering his speech regarding KAL 007 to the nation. Photo courtesy of the Ronald Reagan Archives.

Privately, the President was “deeply disturbed that the Soviets could make such an error.”⁹³ Reagan concluded that the shooting down of KAL 007 illustrated how dangerously close the world was to the nuclear precipice. The Commander-in-Chief questioned if such “mistakes could be made by a fighter pilot, what about a similar miscalculation by the commander of a missile launch crew?”⁹⁴ The implications surrounding the KAL 007 tragedy resulted in Reagan questioning the validity and likelihood of an accidental nuclear war.

⁹³ Fischer, 114.

⁹⁴ Reagan, 584.

A little over a month later, on 10 October 1983 – and with KAL 007 still a painful memory – the President settled in at Camp David to view a copy of ABC’s made-for-television movie “The Day After.” The film depicted the daily lives of those living in Lawrence, Kansas and followed these people as a nuclear exchange between the Soviet Union and the United States destroyed the town and the surrounding area. Fischer remarked that “The Day After” was most certainly was not the first film to illustrate a nuclear holocaust – but it was the first to do it in such a graphic nature, as well as providing it in an anecdotal form which allowed for familiarity with the townspeople.⁹⁵ The *Washington Post* described the film as a “horrific vision of [a] nuclear holocaust.”⁹⁶ Others felt that the movie was making much too big of an advertising and political statement. The Campaign Against Nuclear War, a group based in the nation’s capital, was pleased to feel that ABC was “doing a \$7 million advertising job” for the group’s contentious issue. Representative Edward T. Markey, a Massachusetts Democrat, firmly believed that the movie was bound to be “the most powerful television program in history.”⁹⁷ The film creators’ political stance was not difficult to find as the end of the movie provided a printed message, white on a black background, that read: “It is hoped that the images of this film will inspire the nations of this earth, their people and leaders, to find the means to avert the fateful day.”⁹⁸ The movie did, indeed, inspire such hope.

⁹⁵ Fischer, 115.

⁹⁶ Peter Perl, “‘The Day After’: Nation Girds for Firestorm,” *Washington Post*, 20 November 1983.

⁹⁷ John Corry, “‘The Day After’: TV as Rallying Force,” *The New York Times*, 20 November 1983.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* Corry made the argument in his article that the “word ‘means’ is a code. The movie has conditioned us to accept disarmament, or, at least, to call for a nuclear freeze.”

Shortly after the first national broadcast took place on 20 November 1983, “hundreds of citizens” of Lawrence itself “conducted a candlelight vigil after the broadcast, gathering outdoors beneath a full moon on a crisp night to hear local leaders plead for nuclear disarmament.”⁹⁹

The film certainly would have affected Reagan regardless. But, with his recent thoughts about how an accident could cause a nuclear holocaust – much like an accident caused KAL 007 – the President was doubly inflicted by the film, writing:

In the morning at Camp D[avid]. I ran the tape of the movie ABC is running Nov. 20. It’s called “The Day After” in which Lawrence, Kansas is wiped out in a nuclear war with Russia. It is powerfully done, all \$7 million worth. It’s very effective and left me greatly depressed. So far they haven’t sold any of the 25 ads scheduled and I can see why ... my own reaction: we have to do all we can to have a deterrent and to see there is never a nuclear war.”¹⁰⁰

In the movie, Reagan witnessed, “in agonizing and explicit detail the effects” of a nuclear attack.¹⁰¹ He viewed citizen of Lawrence, Kansas being “vaporized or burned alive by the firestorm on screen” including one woman looking down “to see her legs engulfed in flames that quickly consume the rest of her.” Further, the movie depicted the “ravages of

⁹⁹ Peter J. Boyer and John L. Goldman, “‘The Day After’ Airs Amid Debate, Fear, Intense Hype,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 21 November 1983. It was noted that a “group of counterdemonstrators” nearby “urged peace through military strength.”

¹⁰⁰ Reagan, 585.

¹⁰¹ Tom Shales, “‘The Day After’ Approaches,” *The Washington Post*, 11 October 1983.

radiation sickness from nuclear fallout” with the end result being “virtually everybody in the movie” either dying or clearly going to die.¹⁰²

Reagan used the movie to argue against those in the Pentagon who “claimed a nuclear war was winnable.” In short, Reagan felt those members of the administration were “crazy.” Reagan again declared that the world was on a nuclear precipice.¹⁰³ The American Broadcasting Company (ABC) provided the Reagan administration the opportunity to speak to the nation directly after the movie. Secretary of State Schultz explained that the film was a “vivid and dramatic portrayal of the fact that nuclear war is simply not acceptable” and that the administration was very much focused on getting President Reagan and Soviet leaders together for talks aimed at reducing nuclear arms to ensure that such a devastating nuclear event never occurred.¹⁰⁴

However, the KAL 007 incident clearly did not involve nuclear weapons – it merely invoked a fear in Reagan concerning “what could be.” As well, “The Day After” was a fictional depiction of a nuclear holocaust. However, in early November of 1983, the Reagan administration endured the most significant threat of an all-out nuclear war since the Cuban Missile Crisis. It completed the chain of events that ultimately led Reagan to soften his bellicose approach to American-Soviet relations and, thus, to a foreign policy-shifting speech that announced a search for rapprochement with the Kremlin.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

On 8 November 1983, Yuri Andropov – then still the director of the KGB – sent urgent cables to his agents in Western Europe. The purpose of the message was to inform the agents in the region that their KGB colleagues responsible for monitoring American military bases in Germany reported U.S. armed forces being placed on high alert. This occurred on the heels of Andropov believing military movement between the United States and its NATO allies codenamed “Able Archer 83” was the first sign of an imminent first nuclear strike from the American government. The KGB chief’s beliefs were highly misplaced, though one cannot fault his assumptions. In actuality, “Able Archer 83” was nothing more than a large-scale military exercise designed to simulate the command and communication procedures if the Soviet Union instigated a nuclear war.¹⁰⁵ The Kremlin viewed it, however, as the United States obscuring Western preparations for a first strike. The size of the operation shocked the Soviet Union; it stretched from Norway to Turkey and westward to the Atlantic.¹⁰⁶

The American administration was aware that the exercise could push the limits of an already tense relationship with the Soviet Union. It was noted that:

The original plan for the 1983 exercise called for Weinberger [the U.S. secretary of defense], members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the supreme commander of NATO, and, in its very first discussion stages, even [President] Reagan and [Vice President George] Bush, to participate in this sophisticated test of nuclear attack procedures. According to Robert McFarlane, who had succeeded William Clark two weeks earlier as the

¹⁰⁵ Fischer, 123.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 128.

White House national security advisor, this part of the “war game” was scaled down and most of the top-ranking civilian and military officials were taken out of the exercise because of concern about the high state of Soviet nervousness. Nevertheless, the exercise was still more realistic than in the past.¹⁰⁷

Soviet leaders faced a critical decision: they could either wait for the United States to launch its missile and then immediately respond with their own launch or, conversely, the Soviets could make a preemptive strike based on the assumption that “Able Archer’s” movements predicated a planned American launch. Moscow responded by “upgrading the alert status of twelve of its nuclear-capable fighter aircraft and by ordering Soviet forces in East Germany and Poland to prepare for a retaliatory nuclear strike.”¹⁰⁸ The Soviet Union decided to wait until a Western launch before retaliating. “Able Archer 83” officially concluded on 11 November and, thus, so did “the most dangerous moment that the world lived through since the Cuban Missile Crisis.”¹⁰⁹

The Soviet response to “Able Archer 83” shook Reagan, who called it a “nuclear near miss.”¹¹⁰ As well, the President was still reeling from his viewing of “The Day After” and the Soviet actions in the KAL 007 incident. Put together, the events and the “genuine anxiety” Reagan felt regarding how a simple miscommunication – a

¹⁰⁷ Peter Pry, *War Scare: Russia and American on the Nuclear Brink* (Santa Barbara, California: Praeger Press, 1999), 38.

¹⁰⁸ Ronald E. Powaski, *Return to Armageddon: The United States and the Nuclear Arms Race, 1981-1999* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 41.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 42.

¹¹⁰ Fischer, 135.

misunderstanding from either side – could result in all-out nuclear war caused the President to reevaluate his approach to not only superpower relations, but also the very basis of American foreign policy towards the Soviet Union. His hardline stance on the Soviet Union was the root of the Kremlin’s mistrust; it was this mistrust that caused “Able Archer 83” to bring the world to the brink of a nuclear holocaust. There was a palpable chasm of misunderstanding and miscommunication between the two world superpowers; it was this misunderstanding and miscommunication that assisted in the loss of 269 souls aboard KAL 007. Lastly, Reagan’s ghastly visions of a nuclear winter descending upon his United States of America shook him to the core. The speech introduced “striking changes to U.S. policy”¹¹¹ and, at face value, portrayed Reagan as a President poised to charter a new course on American-Soviet relations built upon a foundation of “cooperation and understanding.”¹¹²

3.6 Reagan’s 16 January 1984 Speech

On 16 January 1984 at ten in the morning, President Reagan spoke to the world from the East Room of the White House. The purpose of the speech was to introduce striking changes in American policy towards the Soviet Union as deemed necessary by the President after the events of the preceding months. In a change of operating standards within the administration, Soviet experts rather than Reagan’s regular speechwriters

¹¹¹ Ibid, 32.

¹¹² Ibid, 17.

largely wrote the speech.¹¹³ As well, the Reagan administration went through the procedure of notifying world leaders of the contents and scope of the speech before the live television address. For example, three days before giving the speech, Reagan wrote to Robert Muldoon, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, to inform that the 16 January speech would “reaffirm the readiness of the United States to pursue a constructive and realistic dialogue with the Soviet Union aimed at building a more positive and stable long-term relationship.” Reagan assured the Prime Minister that the speech would make “clear” his “sincere desire to improve East-West relations.”¹¹⁴

Even as various world leaders received the letter providing a forewarning of the address, the Reagan administration was internally debating the context and specific composition of the speech itself. Approximately a week before the speech was to be delivered, Donald Fortier – who served as Reagan’s Deputy Assistant to the President with responsibility for policy development¹¹⁵ – worried that the speech conveyed a sense of reassurance to the Soviet Union, but did so in “a rather simple way.” Fortier urged Robert McFarlane – the recipient of his analysis – to aid the President in forming a speech that impressed both domestic and foreign audiences with its “thoughtfulness,” while avoiding the impression that the speech was aimed towards an “electoral

¹¹³ Fischer, 32.

¹¹⁴ Ronald Reagan to Robert Muldoon, January 13, 1983, folder “Presidential Address, US-Soviet Relations – Background,” box 32, John Matlock Files, RRL.

¹¹⁵ Fortier served in this capacity under the auspices of the National Security Council.

audience.”¹¹⁶ Fortier also felt that speech lacked detailed explanations of what both countries were required to do to “seize the opportunities” of peace and compromise and, by changing the speech from “goal” oriented to “tasks” oriented, a entirely different – more direct – message would be sent to both the Soviet Union and the world at large.¹¹⁷

Reagan’s speech focused on what the United States and the Soviet Union had in common; the administration felt that, for far too long, the Cold War was waged only because of a fundamental understanding in the vast differences between the two countries. The President insisted, “neither we nor the Soviet Union can wish away the differences between our two societies and our two philosophies. But we should always remember that we do have common interests.”¹¹⁸ Most important among these common interests, Reagan believed, was peace. Reagan continued, arguing, “reducing the risk of war – and especially nuclear war – is priority number one. A nuclear conflict could well be mankind’s last.” The President spoke of the “dangerous misunderstandings” between the two countries – most recently evident in Soviet panic over “Able Archer 83” – and argued that the “gap in Soviet and American perceptions” of each other’s actions greatly increased the likelihood of a nuclear conflict. Reagan no longer viewed Soviet expansionism and military strength as the greatest threat to East-West relations; it was now war. Because of this, the American government sought “cooperation and

¹¹⁶ Memorandum, Donald R. Fortier to Robert C. McFarlane, January 7, 1984, folder “Presidential Address, US-Soviet Relations (1/16/84),” box 31, John Matlock Files, RRL.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 2.

¹¹⁸ Presidential Address on US-Soviet Relations, 16 January 1984, ID# SP833, [SP601-SP931], White House Office of Records Management (hereafter WHORM), RLL.

understanding.” Reagan continued, “We must establish a better working relationship. One marked by greater cooperation and understanding. [We should] rise to the challenges facing us and seize opportunities for peace.”

Two of Reagan’s three strategies for realizing cooperation and understanding with the Soviet Union later played a monumental part in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics becoming intertwined with the administration’s foreign policy.¹¹⁹ Reagan first declared an immediate need for improved dialogue between the two superpowers, insisting “we must and will engage the Soviets in a dialogue as constructive as possible,” and that, “we seek genuine cooperation, [and] cooperation begins with communication.” Further, Reagan made the case that “the fact that neither of us like the other’s system is no reason not to talk.” Second, Reagan sought any measures that could build confidence between the two countries.¹²⁰

Reagan’s fellow Republicans largely praised the speech while it was widely panned by the Democratic Party – especially those seeking the Democratic nomination for the approaching Presidential election. George McGovern, a Democratic presidential candidate, declared, “Reagan is a good television performer, but a television production is not a good substitute for sound foreign policy.” Senator Christopher Dodd, a Democrat from Connecticut, felt that the timing of the speech was peculiar, arguing, “coming as it did at the opening of the Presidential election year, one’s attention is immediately

¹¹⁹ The one of least importance to the Olympic was Reagan’s call for an increased emphasis on reducing the amount of nuclear arms maintained by each country.

¹²⁰ Presidential Address on US-Soviet Relations, 16 January 1984, ID# SP833, [SP601-SP931], WHORM, RLL.

diverted from the substance of the speech to its political background noise.” On the other side of the aisle, Republicans declared the speech flawless in its “balance between sounding conciliatory and challenging.” Further, Republican Melvin Price of Illinois boasted Reagan’s remarks as a “great speech that touched on the main thing that people are thinking about.”¹²¹ As well, the international community welcomed Reagan’s change of stance. For example, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau of Canada remarked “there does seem to be a different tone coming out of Washington,” and “[we certainly] welcome the commitment that President Reagan made in his speech ... a commitment to genuine dialogue between East and West ... this is welcome news, and we really hope the Soviet Union responds in kind.”¹²²

Early indications from the Kremlin provided little hope for the Prime Minister’s desire that the Soviet Union respond “in kind.” Roughly four hours after Reagan’s speech, the Kremlin dismissed it as “propaganda,” maintaining that, “behind the loquacious rhetoric about adherence to limiting the arms race and love of peace, was, in effect, the known position of the United States administration. The whole speech is keynoted by the thesis about the need for the United States to build up its strength. All this shows that there is no indication of any positive changes in the Reagan administration’s approach to the solution of problems of limiting and reducing arms, first of all nuclear ones.” Believing the speech to be nothing more than election year posturing by the American Chief, the Kremlin noted, “we are not giving up on the

¹²¹ United Press International, “Reagan’s Speech Praised and Panned by Lawmakers,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 16, 1984.

¹²² Thomas Walkom, “PM praises tone of Reagan speech,” *The Globe and Mail*, January 18, 1984.

Reagan administration ... we are dealing with things that are not possible to wave away.”¹²³

The speech was a clear detour from President Reagan’s earlier harsh and unforgiving stance against the Soviet Union and the communist world. While Reagan portrayed his belief that a pragmatic shift in relations was needed to secure the world from nuclear disaster, the Soviets believed the speech to be nothing more than Reagan attempting to win over moderate-to-conservative Americans frightened by Reagan’s fanatical views on Cold War policy. As well, the ongoing planning and organizing of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Summer Games stood as another anomaly to Reagan’s previous approach to the Soviet Union.

¹²³ Gary Thatcher, “Reagan gets no applause from Kremlin,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, January 17, 1984 and Robert Gillette, “Soviets Dismiss Reagan Speech as Propaganda,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 17, 1984.

Chapter 4 – A Red Carpet for the Soviets

“I have seen what men can do for each other and to each other. I’ve seen war and peace, feast and famine, depression and prosperity, sickness and health. I’ve seen the depth of suffering and the peaks of triumph. And I know in my heart that man is good; that what is right will always eventually triumph; and that there is purpose and worth to each and every life.”¹

4.1 Reagan and the Olympics

Ronald Reagan was no stranger to the mingling of sport and politics prior to the buildup of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games. Indeed, during the battle for the presidency in 1980, Reagan often used President Jimmy Carter’s decision to boycott the 1980 Moscow Olympics as an example to magnify Carter’s weak understanding of international politics and mishandling of a policy-shifting epoch. However, Carter was quick to discern that Reagan was a staunch supporter of the boycott effort prior to utilizing it as campaign ammunition to lure voters to the Republican ticket. In his 1980 Presidential nomination speech, Carter remarked:

When Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan, we moved quickly to take action. I suspended some grain sales to the Soviet Union; I called for the draft registration and I joined wholeheartedly with the Congress and with the U.S. Olympic Committee and led more than 60 other nations in boycotting the big propaganda show in Russia – the Moscow Olympics.²

¹ An excerpt from Ronald Reagan’s 4 November 1991 speech at the dedication of his Presidential Library and Museum. For the entirety of the speech see, Peter Hannaford and Charles Dobbs, *Remembering Reagan* (Washington, D.C.: Regency Publishing, 2000), 152-53. The last sentence of the above excerpt is carved into Reagan’s headstone at his final resting place overlooking the rolling hills of Simi Valley, California.

² Taken from Jimmy Carter’s remarks while accepting the Presidential nomination at the 1980 Democratic National Convention in New York on 14 August 1980. For the entirety of the speech, please see *The American Presidency Project* at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=44909>.

Carter then publically addressed Reagan's "flip-flopping" on the Olympic matter, concluding that:

The Republican leader [Reagan] opposed two of these forceful but peaceful actions, and he waffled on the third. But when we asked him what he would do about aggression in Southwest Asia, he suggested blockading Cuba. Even his running mate wouldn't go along with that. He doesn't seem to know what to do with the Russians. He's not sure if he wants to feed them or play with them or fight with them.³

Carter's accusations were not far-fetched. It was noted that on 8 April 1980, Reagan informed the American Society of Newspaper Editors that he "could not bring himself to support a government order to a private citizen not to travel abroad." Two days later, Reagan reversed himself. At a news conference in Pittsburgh, Reagan announced that "I support the boycott today, I supported it yesterday and I supported it when the President first called it."⁴ In defense of his wavering, Reagan expressed sympathy for the athletes who would be harmed by Carter's executive decision, saying he found himself "worrying about the young people who've worked so hard, who've trained hard."⁵ In a separate interview, Reagan insisted that he could leave the attendance issue "to the athletes themselves" and that he did not "believe our government should be in the position of

³ Ibid.

⁴ Memorandum, Michael E. Baroody to Michael K. Deaver, 9 May 1984, folder "General Correspondence – MKD Incoming (1)," Box 3, John Kenneth Hill Files, RRL.

⁵ Ibid. The original newspaper clipping is included in the RRL file. It was originally published in the 1 April 1980 *New York Times*.

saying you can't have a visa, you can't leave the country or go. There's something about our government telling our people that can't leave our shores that I can't buy.”⁶

During his own Presidency, Reagan faced a time of change within the Soviet Union. Leonid Brezhnev, the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union since 1964, suffered a fatal heart attack on 10 November 1982. As the Communist leader, Brezhnev was largely favorable to the Western world. He is partly credited with the advent of détente. As well, he generally improved East-West relations through the inclusion of the Partial Test Ban Treaty, the Helsinki Accords, and the installation of a direct telephone line between the White House and the Kremlin. Brezhnev's passing would not be the last Soviet leadership death in the lead-up to the 1984 Olympic Games. Brezhnev's successor, Yuri Andropov, the General Secretary of the Central Committee from 12 November 1981 succumbed to total renal failure on 9 February 1984.

The election of Andropov shortly after Brezhnev's death was cause for concern in the West as Andropov was the first KGB agent to ascend to the leadership of the Communist world. His ruthlessness against those who dissented was legendary. He was calculating and in complete control. Alexander Yakovlev – later an advisor to Mikhail Gorbachev – felt that, out of all the Communist leaders, “Andropov was the most

⁶ Ibid. The original publication was in the 1 April 1980 edition of *The Washington Post*. Reagan also made it clear that the United States – and Carter – needed other countries to participate in the boycott. Reagan felt that “if just one country doesn't show up, I think the Soviet propaganda machine probably grinds out something like the United States didn't come because they were afraid of getting beaten.”

dangerous ... simply because he was smarter than the rest.”⁷ In the West, Andropov’s legacy was largely that of planning the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia and as the man who “substituted the KGB for the Communist party in governing the Soviet Union.”⁸

It was ultimately Konstantin Chernenko, Andropov’s successor, who parlayed with the Reagan administration and the LAOOC in the Olympic boycott mêlée after Reagan’s change of heart towards the Communist world. Serving from 13 February 1984 until his death on 10 March 1985, Chernenko allowed for the continued escalation of the Cold War after the rapid evaporation of détente during the Andropov years.⁹ Reagan’s four years in office saw three Soviet leaders die in office. Reagan’s belief that all three were “tough, old-line Communists addicted to Lenin’s secular religion of expansionism and world domination” made any potentially progressive talks difficult. When pressed on not yet visiting or hosting a Soviet leader in 1984, Reagan quipped: “How am I supposed to get anyplace with Russians if they keep dying on me?”¹⁰

Nevertheless, the leadership of the Soviet Union continuously in flux with the deaths of its leaders, the Reagan administration continued to seek ways to improve US-Soviet relations. In early 1983 – shortly after Reagan’s substantial foreign policy speech

⁷ David Remnick, *Lenin’s Tomb: The Last Days of the Soviet Empire* (New York: Random House, 1993), 191.

⁸ Ion Mihai Pacepa, “No Peter the Great: Vladimir Putin is in the Andropov mold,” *National Review*, 20 September 2004.

⁹ For a more complete biography and legacy of the three mentioned Soviet leaders see, Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1994).

¹⁰ Winston Groom, *Ronald Reagan: Our 40th President* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2002), 121.

in January – Secretary of State George Shultz substantiated to Reagan that “bilateral dialogue with the Soviets” maintained an ever-increasing importance in the nation’s “overall strategy.”¹¹ There was reason to hope, Shultz felt, for a “more stable” US-Soviet relationship because the foundation was beginning to develop.¹² Indeed, even as Shultz wrote his recommendations to Reagan, several bilateral agreements between the United States and the Soviet Union were already agreed to or being considered. In February of 1983, the two countries agreed on Pacific maritime boundaries as well as regulating the *Law of the Sea* in respect to deep seabed mining. As well, the Soviet Union and the United States agreed on the establishment of consulates in Kiev and New York City, and several agreements on cooperation in the field of energy.¹³

Cultural exchanges – especially after Stalin’s death in 1953 – continued to be an initiative welcomed by both countries. The leadership of the Soviet Union after Stalin’s death crafted a program of cultural exchanges that saw a stream of Soviets artists, athletes, musicians, and dancers visit and perform in the West. An official agreement on cultural exchanges between the two countries was reached in December 1957.

¹¹ George P. Shultz to Ronald Reagan, 3 March 1983, folder “Soviet Union – Sensitive Files – 1983 (02/15/1983-07/14/1983),” Robert C. McFarlane Files, RRL.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ U.S.-Soviet Bilateral Relations by Category, 13 February 1983, folder “Soviet Union – Sensitive Files – 1983 (02/15/1983-07/14/1983),” Robert C. McFarlane Files, RRL.

Following the official agreement came even further cultural exchanges: students, teachers, movies, and television programs.¹⁴ The ongoing cultural exchanges between the Soviet Union and the United States came to an abrupt halt on 1 September 1983 when the Soviet Union shot down KAL 007 over the USSR's Sakhalin Island. Shortly after, a planned Soviet basketball tour against seven American colleges was cancelled when all seven institutions vehemently argued against competing with the Soviets.¹⁵ Bill Wall, the President of the United States Amateur Basketball Association, stated that despite believing that politics had no place in sport, there "was no option other than calling off the series because of the outrage and demand of the U.S. public." Further, the LAOOC announced that the Soviet Union decided against sending its team to the pre-Olympic rowing and canoeing competition to be held in the United States just a few weeks later "due to [the] existing conditions."¹⁶ The end of the exchanges floored the United States Olympic Committee's Executive Director Donald Miller, who remarked, "It's a sorry state of affairs that we do not have men with enough intellect to develop a foreign policy with some meat in it, but go back to the same thing again and again. Isn't there more to our foreign policy than amateur sports?"¹⁷

¹⁴ For an excellent history of the cultural exchanges – especially in terms of athletics – see, Stephen Wagg and David Andrews (eds.), *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

¹⁵ The tour, schedule to take place between the 15-27 of November, included stops at Kansas, Maryland, Alabama, Vanderbilt, Oklahoma, Kentucky, and Houston.

¹⁶ News Services, "Soviet Team's Tour Officially Cancelled," *The Washington Post*, 17 September 1983. Brackets mine.

¹⁷ Howard Kurtz and Don Oberdorfer, "Airports Closed to Gromyko," *The Washington Post*, 17 September 1983.

Despite the savagery of the incident, the Reagan administration eventually realized it to be an excellent opportunity to display the President's new willingness to reach compromise and diplomacy with the Soviet Union. But first, the administration faced a monumental struggle in appeasing American thirst for a swift and tactical response to the Soviet action.

4.2 The Olympics and KAL 007

The Soviets made their specific requests in turn for their guaranteed attendance at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games prior to the KAL 007 incident – that is, the right for Aeroflot flights to land at Los Angeles International Airport and to stop at Cuba en route, the docking of a Soviet vessel at Long Beach Harbor, and an unprecedented amount of security at the Olympics.¹⁸ Even in early 1983, Peter Ueberroth – the President of the LAOOC – claimed to believe that the Soviets would be in attendance “without question.”¹⁹ The Soviets generally muted their criticism of Los Angeles' smog, crime, costs, and lack of transport. There was no reason to believe that the Kremlin's bellicose statements regarding American society – and Los Angeles' Olympics planning in general – were anything more than the usual Cold War posturing.

Amid these easing tensions Ueberroth attended Spartakiad – an enormous Soviet domestic sporting festival – in the summer of 1983.²⁰ Ueberroth, and the entire

¹⁸ Jay Mathews, “Russians Are Coming: Criticism of '84 Games Eases,” *The Washington Post*, 28 January 1983.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ The first Spartakiad was held in 1923 within the ranks of the Soviet's Red Army.

International Olympic Committee, were largely pleased with the proceedings – especially the Soviet agreement to sign a \$3 million contract for television coverage of the upcoming Summer Olympic Games. With the threat of a Soviet retaliatory boycott an ever-present source of discussion, Ueberroth confirmed that he and Soviet sport leaders “discussed everything from transportation to security, to officials, to housing, to every part of the Games. We are proceeding to work close together for a solution of problems. To my knowledge, there is no official request from the Soviet organizing committee that has not yet been met.”²¹ As well, Ueberroth suggested that a boycott of the 1984 Olympic Games was not going to happen, after discussing it “in a sense” with the Soviet leaders. He explained that both involved groups agreed, “The 1980 U.S. boycott of the Moscow Olympics was an incorrect political tool that was improper.”²²

Marat Gramov, the leader of the Soviet’s State Sports Committee, was less conciliatory in his remarks regarding the potential of a Soviet Olympic boycott, stating:

Los Angeles has many problems. We are concerned mainly about three things – security, transportation and the small number of foreign referees. Los Angeles decided not to spend money to bring referees from other countries. We are worried about that. In America, to win the Olympics is a national priority, even if by foul means. The problem of the referees sharpens the problem.²³

²¹ Associated Press, “Olympic Official Sees No Chance of Soviet Boycott,” *The Washington Post*, 7 August 1983.

²² Ibid.

²³ Staff Reports, “USSR to Decide in May About Olympics,” *The Washington Post*, 23 July 1983.

The Moscow government's daily *Izvestia* portrayed for Moscow readers that Los Angeles was a city "plagued by murders and deadly smog"²⁴ – this despite Kremlin trepidations being alleviated. There also existed substantial concern over the LAOOC's ability to provide adequate facilities for the athletes. For instance, Soviet leaders proclaimed that the promises from the LAOOC were "clearly just a smokescreen of promises and assurances." It was argued that the gymnasts performing at the Olympics "have no tunnel to walk through ... but would have to walk several hundred yards under the open sky" both before and after their routines.²⁵

The Soviets also complained about the commercialization of the Olympic Games. It was felt that the LAOOC was "perverting the Olympic ideals" and that "American big business [had] seized control of the Games." This was no better symbolized, the Soviets argued, then by the control of the Los Angeles Olympics by "millionaire Peter Ueberroth."²⁶ The Soviets still brought forth more concerns. In mid-June of 1982, Sergi Pavlov – the chair of the Soviet National Olympic Committee – claimed that the Reagan administration had not yet "given written guarantee that the *Olympic Charter*" would be obeyed during the Los Angeles Olympics.²⁷ Pavlov continued that Soviet participation

²⁴ Associated Press, "Olympics," *The Washington Post*, 26 April 1982.

²⁵ Yuri Titov, "Criticism from Soviets," *The New York Times*, 23 April 1982.

²⁶ Harry Trimborn, "Soviets Criticize Olympic Plans as Commercial," *The Los Angeles Times*, 27 April 1982.

²⁷ Associated Press, "Russia seeks pledges on safety over 1984 Games," *The New York Times*, 18 June 1982.

was only possible on the condition that “the necessary guarantee[s] are not only provided by the U.S. government but also undeviatingly observed.”²⁸

The quarantine of Soviet visitors in America also bothered the Kremlin. Many places in America were off limits to any visiting communist. Disneyland, for example, was location non grata to those visitors from the Eastern Bloc. It was noted by the Soviets that “only Rhode Island is wide open.”²⁹ Soviet complaints were largely unsubstantiated as three years of work was already completed by the United States Department of State by the time the Kremlin voiced its displeasure to the media about further constraints on Soviet travel within the country. This point of contention from the Soviets was incongruous, as the Kremlin was well aware of the work being done to lessen travel restrictions. In an undated letter,³⁰ the US Department of State explained:

The Soviet Government first instituted a system of stringent travel restrictions for foreigners in 1941. After attempts to secure the abolition of travel controls and closed areas in the Soviet Union, the United States reluctantly instituted its own system of closed areas for Soviet citizens on January 3, 1955. Since then, the United States has on many occasions proposed mutual abolition or reduction of all travel restrictions. The

²⁸ Ibid. The phrase “undeviatingly observed” is likely a request by the Soviets for the Americans to jail any dissidents during and prior to the Olympic Games.

²⁹ Steve Harvey, “Ban on Soviet travels is map of curiosities,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 9 December 1983.

³⁰ The draft of the letter was written in late 1980. It can be assumed that the Kremlin received the letter by the New Year.

United States avails itself of this opportunity to reiterate its offer to abolish or reduce travel restrictions or closed areas on the basis of reciprocity.³¹

The map of closed areas had not been revised since 1967, and there had been “substantial changes in the areas which” the American government wished to provide “access to [for] Soviet travelers.”³² The work of the Interagency Coordinating Committee for US-Soviet Affairs³³ was a response met to “match the reductions in percentage of closed territory made by the Soviets in 1978.”³⁴ Despite Soviet claims to the contrary, the United States wished to “emphasize again that its firm preference [was] to abolish all restrictions on free travel, and repeat its earlier offers to discuss with the Soviet Government any proposal to this end.”³⁵ The United States followed through with its desire. In a 25 November 1982 telex to the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, Serguei Pavlov – the President of the USSR Olympic Committee – wanted further information “regarding [the] restriction of Soviet tourists wishing to attend [the] 1984 Games.”³⁶ The Department of State informed William Hussey, the Director of International Relations for the LAOOC, that the “[United States government has no plans or intentions of imposing

³¹ Memorandum, Richard Burt to the Interagency Coordinating Committee for US-Soviet Affairs Representatives, 1 August 1980, folder “USSR Reciprocity (4/8), Box 33, Jack Matlock Files, RRL.

³² Ibid. Brackets mine.

³³ Hereafter ICCUSA.

³⁴ Memorandum, Richard Burt to the Interagency Coordinating Committee for US-Soviet Affairs Representatives, 1 August 1980, folder “USSR Reciprocity (4/8), Box 33, Jack Matlock Files, RRL. Burt was the Chair of the ICCUSA.

³⁵ Ibid. Brackets mine.

³⁶ Telex, Serguei Pavlov to Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, 25 November 1982, folder “Government Relations – State Department,” Box 64, LAOOC Records, CEYR Library, UCLASC.

a quota on Soviet tourism during the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles. Standard visa application and review procedures for Soviet nationals will be in effect.”³⁷

The Soviets were not the only one hurling complaints and accusations. Los Angeles police chief Daryl Gates released an “unvarnished” report “alleging the existence of a Soviet plot to disrupt the 1984 [G]ames with criminals and terrorists disguised as Russian Jewish immigrants.”³⁸ Specifically, the report authored by the Los Angeles Police Department suggested:

Due to the advanced state of forensic psychology and psychiatry in the Soviet Union, many knowledgeable people are of the opinion that the Soviets are selecting dangerous criminals and sending them to the United States as refugees via the Jewish Immigration Quota ... Intelligence agents and spies are infiltrating in the same way.³⁹

The Jewish community responded with swift and harsh criticism of the police chief. Peter Ueberroth lambasted Gates for expressing an unfounded concern that could cause “a whole damper [to fall] on our committee’s relations with the Soviets.”⁴⁰

International Olympic President Juan Antonio Samaranch came to the defense of the LAOOC three days after Gramov’s remarks. Samaranch assured the *New York Times*

³⁷ United States Department of State to William Hussey, 30 November 1982, folder “Government Relations – State Department,” Box 64, LAOOC Records, CEYR Library, UCLASC.

³⁸ Staff reports, “The Olympic Games,” *The Nation*, 6 March 1982. Brackets mine. Also see “Gates says Soviets sending agents to disrupt ’84 Games,” *Press-Telegram*, 23 Jan 1982 and “Gates rebuked for comments on Soviet Olympics plot,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 25 January 1982.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

“I know Soviet Union, and I know sports in this country, and I know the word boycott does not exist in this country.”⁴¹ Of all the remarks made, the most questionable was that of Ueberroth declaring that not one Soviet request had gone unmet. To this point, it was simply not true. The federal government had not yet approved Soviet flights. The local port authority had not yet received approval to allow a Soviet vessel to dock at Long Beach Harbor. And, finally, the funding for unprecedented security had not yet been secured – nor the manpower – from either the state or federal government. The downing of KAL 007 made meeting those tasks even more difficult. If Reagan was indeed set on bettering relations with the Soviet Union as outlined in his 16 January speech, the proceeding months of Olympic planning would test his personal and his administration’s resolve.

Only hours after the attack on KAL 007 took place, Reagan received a memo on official White House letterhead signed by “Jus.” Calling the President by his first name, the colleague wrote:

This is no time for sanctions; no way you can get even on this dastardly act. Let the act itself stand as the punishment. Make use of this tragic incident, it substantiates everything you have been saying all these years about the Russians – that they are bastards and sons of bitches not to be trusted, and that we must increase our military strength or they will continue such reckless abuses.⁴²

⁴¹ Special to the New York Times, “No Soviet Boycott Seen by Samaranch,” *The New York Times*, 26 July 1983.

⁴² Jus to Ronald Reagan, 2 September 1983, folder “OA 16248,” Box 8, Anne Higgins Files, RRL.

All told, by noon on 2 September – less than 24 hours after the KAL 007 incident – the White House received 1,900 telephone calls, and 1,800 telegrams and mailgrams.⁴³ Anne Higgins, serving as the Director of Reagan’s Office of Correspondence, was responsible for organizing the incoming calls and letters and passing along the most pressing to the President. The first telegram she presented to the President grasped the solemnity of the matter immediately. The telegram, written by the parents of Irene Steckler – a passenger aboard KAL 007 – argued that the deaths of Steckler, and her husband Stuart, “were the result of the Soviet Union violating every concept of human rights” and that it was “an act of murder that cannot remain unpunished.” A swift and firm response to the Soviets was not an act of personnel revenge for the distraught parents. Rather, they asked that Reagan’s reaction “deter the Soviet Union from further committing such wanton murder.”⁴⁴

Another prominent telegram was received from John Noble of Muncy, Pennsylvania. Noble began with no pleasantries to the President, starting, “... having been a prisoner of the Soviets for 10 years, I want to encourage you to take the firmest possible stand against the Soviets for their latest act of inhumanity in shooting down a civilian airliner.”⁴⁵ Remembering his experience as a Soviet prisoner, Noble insisted to

⁴³ Memorandum, Anne Higgins to Ronald Reagan, 2 September 1983, folder “OA 16248,” Box 8, Anne Higgins Files, RRL.

⁴⁴ Telegram, Jean Pierre and Eva Bigotte to Ronald Reagan, n.d., folder “OA 16248,” Box 8, Anne Higgins Files, RRL.

⁴⁵ Telegram, John Noble to Ronald Reagan, 1 September 1983, folder “OA 16248,” Box 8, Anne Higgins Files, RRL. Noble and his father were both arrested by Soviet occupation forces in Dresden, Germany under the auspices of spying allegations. Noble spent ten years within the Soviet Gulag system. As later learned, Noble’s steps to freedom included “smuggling out a cryptic message taped to the postcard of a

Reagan that “only the strongest retaliation will be understood by the Godless communists.”⁴⁶

Not all American citizens called for the “strongest retaliation” possible from Reagan. Some calmly asked the President how he could “justify selling grain to murdering Russians” and that the United States could not “sit back silently for the sake of foreign exchange.”⁴⁷ Others upset by the American government providing grain to the Soviets insisted that they would be willing to “pay \$4 for a loaf of bread” if the grain deal came to a screeching halt and further retaliation fell upon the Soviet Union.⁴⁸ Others provided an even further detailed analysis of how Reagan should react to the Soviet’s actions. Douglas and Cathy Albrecht insisted that Reagan close all “Aeroflot offices in the U.S.” and expel all “Soviet personnel” and cancel all “Aeroflot landing rights under the U.S. jurisdiction” with the caveat of permitting declared emergency landings.⁴⁹ The suggestions continued. The “immediate revocation” of the “hundreds of licenses issued to Soviet fishing vessels entitling them to the privilege of fishing within” 200 miles of the

prisoner with mailing privileges.” Douglas Martin, “John Noble, Gulag Survivor, Dies at 84,” *The New York Times*, 26 November 2007. As well, Noble published a book detailing his experience as a Soviet prisoner. See John Noble, *I Was a Slave in Russia: An American Tells His Story* (New York: Devin-Adair Publishing, 1958).

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Telegram, Stuart Young to Ronald Reagan, 1 September 1983, folder “OA 16248,” Box 8, Anne Higgins Files, RRL.

⁴⁸ Telegram, Mr. and Mrs. Wilford W. Chapman to Ronald Reagan, 1 September 1983, folder “OA 16248,” Box 8, Anne Higgins Files, RRL.

⁴⁹ Telegram, Douglas and Catch Albrecht to Ronald Reagan, 2 September 1983, folder “OA 16248,” Box 8, Anne Higgins Files, RRL.

United States was another argument offered.⁵⁰ As well, other potential repercussions included the “halting [of] U.S. grain sales to the Soviet Union ... with an eye toward finding alternative buyers to protect [American] farmers” and to “immediately cancel all U.S.-U.S.S.R. cultural exchanges.”⁵¹

For the time being, the American government was vastly more concerned about gathering the facts and creating a plan of action. An official response to the attack on KAL 007 would come soon enough. Even more troubling for the administration was a history of the same behavior from the Soviets. It was noted by William Clark – one of Reagan’s national security advisors – that the Soviets maintained a “long history, beginning in 1946, of shooting down unarmed aircraft near their borders” and that they also maintained a “policy of electronic deception of radio air navigation aids which have lured many aircraft across their borders, only to be shot down.”⁵² Clark’s main cause for concern was an appropriate response to the disaster. He was sure that the “decision to attack the airliner was made at a very high level” in the Kremlin – it was no accident. Clark warned “in past cases where the Soviets ... committed egregious crimes they and their apologists ... attempted through disinformation and lies to turn the force away from their actions and somehow blame the U.S. or its allies. Unless we take the offensive they will try to put us on the defensive.”⁵³ Clark implored the President to reach a response

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Memorandum, William P. Clark to Ronald Reagan, n.d., folder “KAL (1),” Box 28, Jack Matlock Files, RRL.

⁵³ Ibid. Underline is part of Clark’s original message.

that signified “meaningful actions without making it appear that we [the United States] are improperly capitalizing on the tragedy itself.”⁵⁴

Only hours after the incident occurred, Secretary of State Shultz supplied President Reagan with a list of diplomatic responses the American government was already implementing. Shultz explained to Reagan that the “U.S. response must involve both steps in our bilateral relationship and a far-reaching effort to build and sustain a strong international response.”⁵⁵ Despite there being several “gaps in knowledge of the events leading up to the attack,” Shultz informed Reagan that the American government had already dictated to the Kremlin that it was ending any future discussion on the “planned extension of the bilateral agreement on cooperation in transportation.”⁵⁶ However, it was a specific “initiative” that Shultz suggested that would prove to have grave implications for the LAOOC’s planning process, as well as providing President Reagan with the opportunity to deal “in good faith” with the Soviet Union as his new foreign policy dictated. Shultz further informed Reagan:

We are urgently considering steps to organize and support international action against Soviet civil aviation interests, particularly Aeroflot international operations and flights by third-country airlines to the Soviet Union. For example, we could seek immediate allied and third-country

⁵⁴ Ibid. Brackets mine.

⁵⁵ Memorandum, George P. Shultz to Ronald Reagan, 1 September 1983, folder “KAL (1),” Box 28, Jack Matlock Files, RRL.

⁵⁶ Ibid. Shultz also outlined other steps already being taken. For example, the State Department strongly urged “prominent Americans” – including three Congressmen with upcoming trips – to cancel plans to visit the Soviet Union. As well, a strong case was being put forth to both “European and Japanese allies” to produce and widely disseminate “condemnatory statements.”

agreement to refuse to accept Aeroflot flights plans for a specified period. We would pursue actions of this kind within organizations such as the International Civil Aviation Organization, but much work will also have to be done in bilateral consultations with other nations. In this connection, we are studying ways to exploit the building condemnation of the Soviet attack by private organizations, such as the International Pilots Association.⁵⁷

The Soviet side of the story was vastly different than the American version. Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko provided to the State Department the Soviet explanation of KAL 007. Gromyko stated that the “plane did not have navigation lights, did not respond to queries and did not enter into contact with the radio control service.”⁵⁸ As well, Gromyko insisted that the jets of the Soviet Anti-Aircraft Defense system “tried to give ... assistance in directing [KAL 007] to the nearest airfield ... but the intruder plane did not react to the signals and warnings from the Soviet fighters and continued its flight in the direction of the Sea of Japan.”⁵⁹

The story as told by TASS to the Soviet people altered widely from the American perspective as well. The news service claimed that the “frantic anti-Soviet hysteria around the disappearance of the South Korean aircraft that carried out a provocative flight over Soviet territory ... is taking on increasingly unbridled and coarse forms.” Further, TASS insisted:

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Andrei Gromyko to US Department of State, 1 September 1983, folder “Korean Airline Shootdown,” Box 12, Executive Secretariat, NSC Records, Box 9, RRL.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

The coordinated and deliberate character of both the provocative flight itself and the broad anti-Soviet campaign subsequently unleashed by the U.S. administration is worthy of attention. It is evident that the ‘incident’ was prepared in advance and that – judging by what followed – it was expected. It is also indicative that the first report about the disappearance of the aircraft came from the CIA.⁶⁰

The Soviets also complained bitterly about the Reagan administration’s “crusade against Socialism” and its clearly “calculated” attempts to “raise a new wave of anti-Sovietism and anti-Communism by any means and discredit the Soviet Union.” The Soviets considered it nothing short of American “propaganda.”⁶¹ Indeed, American media coverage of the KAL 007 incident was, in some aspects, sensationalist. *Time Magazine*, for example, portrayed on its 12 September 1983 cover three Soviet fighters exploding the passenger aircraft in midair. The actual attack was less brutal, though no less terrifying. The investigation into KAL 007 concluded that after the missile exploded on KAL 007, the passengers had upwards of 12 minutes to don oxygen masks before impact into the ocean. They were conscious throughout the ordeal.⁶²

⁶⁰ Text of Pravda article on South Korean airliner incident, 5 September 1983, folder “Korean Airline Shootdown,” Box 12, Executive Secretariat, NSC Records, Box 9, RRL.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² United States Court of Appeal for the Second Circuit Nos. 907, 1057 August Term, 1994 (Argued: 5 April 1995; Decided 12 July 1995, Dockets Nos. 94-7208, 94-7218).

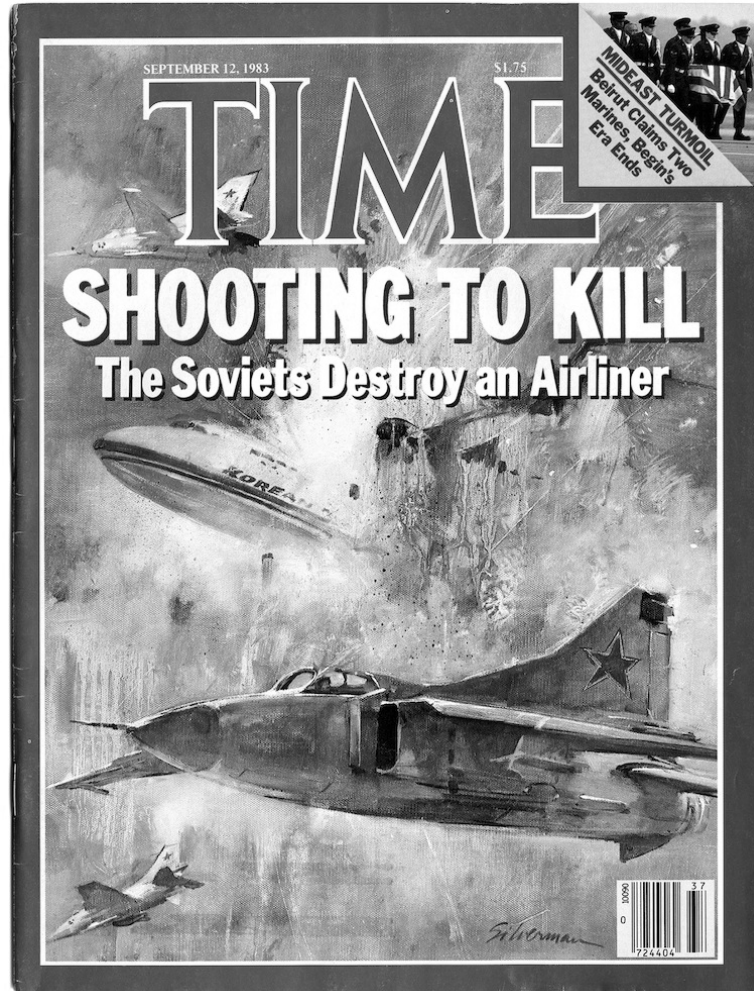


Figure 4.1 - *Time Magazine's* depiction of three Soviet fighters shooting down KAL 007 was a prime example of "American propaganda" that the Kremlin was upset about. The cover is part of the Smithsonian Institute's digital collections.

The Soviet response was an angry retort focused on answering Reagan's comments made earlier the same day. The President sat before the cameras for a national television office at nine in the morning, censuring the Soviets for not admitting to the atrocity:

But despite the savagery of their crime, the universal reaction against it, and the evidence of their complicity, the Soviets still refuse to tell the

truth. They have persistently refused to admit that their pilot fired on the Korean aircraft. Indeed, they have not even told the Russian people that a plane was shot down. The Soviet Government calls the whole thing an accident. I call it murder. Let me repeat the stark words of the Soviet pilot himself after signaling that his missile warheads were locked on the airliner: ‘I have executed the launch. The target is destroyed. I am breaking off attack.’⁶³

The shooting down of KAL 007 was just one piece of the puzzle that shifted Reagan’s beliefs on how to shape foreign policy with the Soviet Union. In just over a month from his address on KAL 007, Reagan had a private viewing of the apocalyptic “The Day After.” The nuclear scare as a result of ‘Able Archer 83’ was still two months away. But, even in the first week of September 1983, Reagan’s address hinted at the possibility of a more reconciliatory approach to the Soviet Union. Near the end of his address, Reagan made the plea that:

Realism and strength are essential. But, if we are to succeed in our long-term effort to bring the Soviets into the world community of nations, we must also talk to them. We must tell them what the world expects from them: The world expects their cooperation in building a safer place to live.⁶⁴

⁶³ Presidential Television Address: Flight 007, 5 September 1983, folder “KAL (2),” Box 28, Jack Matlock Files, RRL. Reagan made generous use of historical presidencies in his address. Speaking of understanding who the Soviets *truly* were, Reagan urged the country to “steadfastly gird ourselves for what John F. Kennedy called the ‘long twilight struggle.’ We must see the Soviets as they are, rather than as some would like them to be.” As well, Reagan ended his speech with an ode to Abraham Lincoln, saying, “let us have faith, in Abraham Lincoln’s words, ‘that right makes might, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it.’ ... this is not the role we sought – we preach no manifest destiny. But like Americans who began this country and brought forth this last, best hope of mankind, history has asked much of the Americans of our own time. Much we have already given. Much more we must be prepared to give.”

⁶⁴ Ibid.

The Kremlin's further response to Reagan's television appearance was no less hostile, calling it an "aggressive, hateful speech and that, again, any United States' proof was "just another fabrication."⁶⁵ More damaging to the Los Angeles Olympics than Reagan rhetoric was the President's swift and decisive action against the Soviet Union and Aeroflot. In his speech, Reagan noted that his administration was "suspending negotiations on several bilateral agreements" that were under consideration prior to the incident.⁶⁶

Reagan's actions were even more severe than those the speech outlined. In a personal letter to the Civil Aeronautics Board, Reagan wrote:

The Soviet attack on Korean Air Line Flight 7 on Sept. 1, 1983, which results in the loss of 269 innocent lives, calls for a united, firm, and measured response from the international community. Toward this end, I have initiated a number of measures in coordination with other nations ... to insure that measures are taken against the Soviet Union to secure appropriate redress for this tragic loss of lives and property. I ... have determined that it is in the essential foreign policy interest of the United States to take resolute action against the Soviet air carrier Aeroflot. I have

⁶⁵ The Associated Press, "Kremlin flays Reagan for speech about jet," *The Reading Eagle*, 6 September 1983.

⁶⁶ Presidential Television Address: Flight 007, Sept. 5 1983, folder "KAL 007 (2)," Box 28, John F. Matlock Files, RFL. Note that no "bilateral agreement" had been reached at this point for the Los Angeles Olympics. Regardless, the suspension of future agreements was an issue of serious concern for the LAOOC.

determined that it would be appropriate to reaffirm the suspension of Aeroflot flights to and from the United States.⁶⁷

Rather than simply restricting Soviet airlines from entering American airspace, the President opted to forbid U.S. carriers from booking connecting flights with Aeroflot – even those away from American soil – and to sever any and all ties with the Soviet company. Further, Reagan ordered the closing of Aeroflot offices in both New York and Washington, D.C. and stipulated that the Soviet employees of both offices be expelled from the country.⁶⁸ White House spokesperson Larry Speakes announced that the President planned to continue enforcing the sanctions “for a period of time, in part dependent upon the extent to which the U.S.S.R. demonstrates its willingness to honor essential standards of civil aviation, makes a full account of the downing of the airliner, and issues an apology as well as compensation to aggrieved parties.”⁶⁹

The barring of Soviet aircraft from American airspace raised other issues. For instance, nearly a year before the KAL 007 incident, the Los Angeles Organizing Committee reached a deal with the East German airline Interflug to fly a Berlin-Ganer-Los Angeles route to transport athletes and cargo. Further, the security for the flights was to be provided by both the LAOOC and the regional Airport Authority. Questions were

⁶⁷ Text of Reagan Letter to C.A.B. Chairman, *The New York Times*, 9 September 1983.

⁶⁸ Sentinel Wire Services, “US Halts Aeroflot business,” *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, 9 September 1983.

⁶⁹ Timothy Schellhardt and John Williams, “President Orders Aeroflot to Close Its 2 U.S. Offices,” *The Wall Street Journal*, 9 September 1983.

sure to proliferate about the legality of other communists controlled countries landing their aircraft at Los Angeles International for the Olympics.⁷⁰

Outrage over the Soviets' action drew public response from America's allied countries. In England, the *Times of London* newspaper noted "public revulsion" over the Soviets. The *Daily Mail* dubbed it nothing short of a "massacre in the sky." Paris television made KAL 007 the lead story. The disaster dominated the main newspaper headlines for several days. *Quotidien de Paris* ran the headline "USSR Owes Explanation to the World." Rome's *Il Tempo* called the incident "a deliberate mass murder." Oslo's *Dagbladet* considered it "coldblooded murder."⁷¹ The French government wished to "study Reagan's proposals" and opted to "see what might emerge from" the scenario. As well, British Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe said it was important "for humanity to find a way of responding which will prevent such a thing from ever happening again," but deferred any discussion on whether London would halt Aeroflot flights and argued that any such treatment should be "taken collectively, not just on the basis of one nation's decision."⁷²

Reagan's resolution on Aeroflot operations in the United States clearly obstructed the preparations being completed by the LAOOC. In a 9 December 1983 memorandum,

⁷⁰ Meeting notes, "East German INTERFLUG Airline meeting with Los Angeles Airport Authority," 8 December 1982, folder "Government Relations – State Department," Box 64, LAOOC Records, CEYR Library, UCLASC.

⁷¹ Memorandum, Foreign Media Reaction to the Downing of KAL Flight # 007, Charles Z. Wick to All Cabinet Members, 2 September 1981, folder "Korean Plane Incident (1)," Box 45, Michael Deaver Files, RRL.

⁷² William Drozdiak, "Allies Shy Away From Curbs on Aeroflot Flights," *The Washington Post*, 7 September 1983.

Richard Levine – a member of Reagan’s National Security Council – wrote that because of the “President’s KAL decision” all “Soviet proposals” regarding Aeroflot flights and vessels in Long Beach Harbor were to be rejected by both the State Department and “other concerned agencies.”⁷³

Shortly after Reagan’s decision, the Soviets attempted to circumvent the American government entirely. Soviet requests for special Aeroflot flights to the United States and the berthing of a ship were forwarded directly to the LAOOC. The LAOOC then forwarded the request on to the White House. In effect, the LAOOC was acting as a middleman for the Soviets. Kenneth Hill – the Federal Security Coordinator for the 1984 Olympics – wrote to Reagan’s Chief of Staff to express concern over the issue:

Several officers at State have expressed skepticism with the proposed procedure of having these requests filtered through the LAOOC. They were not objecting to the fact that you would be making the final decision, only that the interjection of the LAOOC circumvents normal established procedures. They correctly indicated that the LAOOC would be, in effect, a broker for the Soviets and would not necessarily have the best interests of the U.S. Government at heart. The concern the LAOOC has over whether the U.S.S.R. will boycott or not, manifests itself in their doing everything possible to placate the Soviets. Consequently, one must remain wary of the LAOOC’s motives.⁷⁴

⁷³ Memorandum, Richard Levine to Robert C. McFarlane, 9 December 1983, folder “Olympics 1984 – USSR (2),” Box 30, John F. Matlock Files, RRL.

⁷⁴ Memorandum, Kenneth J. Hill to Michael McManus, 16 December 1983, folder “Deaver and McManus, Memos to,” Box 2, Kenneth J. Hill Files, RRL.

In a 23 December 1983⁷⁵ memorandum to Michael K. Deaver – Reagan’s Deputy Chief of Staff and the official White House Liaison to the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics – it was noted that “Soviet sports authorities are attempting to use the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee as a conduit for pressing certain demands on the US Government.” Further, Derwinski was greatly concerned that the Soviets were attempting to bypass Reagan’s stance on Aeroflot flights as a result of KAL 007 by seeking to get “clearance” directly from the LAOOC.⁷⁶ To that end, Derwinski wished for Deaver to inform the LAOOC that “the [State] Department” would “accept only those Soviet ... requests that are submitted in these official channels” and that it would “not accept requests submitted through the LAOOC.” Finally, Derwinski wanted to inform the LAOOC that such requests were “properly government-to-government matters” and that the Los Angeles group needed to decline any requests to “act as a middleman” for the Soviets.⁷⁷

Deaver’s role in the Reagan administration went much deeper than just being Deputy Chief of Staff. It is said that Deaver was the “modern-day equivalent of a courtier to the king.”⁷⁸ The Deputy Chief of Staff was small and quiet but maintained an intense passion for his work and for Reagan, whom he worked for in various capacities

⁷⁵ The memorandum as found in the Ronald Reagan Library shows the date as 23 December 1984. This is clearly a typographical error. I have taken the liberty of changing the year to 1983 in this text -- and in the footnote – for sake of clarity.

⁷⁶ Memorandum, Edward J. Derwinski to Michael K. Deaver, 23 December 1983, folder “Olympics 1984 – USSR 2,” Box 30, John F. Matlock Files, RRL.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Martin Anderson, *Revolution: The Reagan Legacy* (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1990), 215.

for nearly twenty years by the time Reagan entered the Oval Office. Deaver “revered Reagan and ... drew intense pleasure from working for him.”⁷⁹ After two decades of serving Reagan’s political needs, Deaver inherently knew what the President valued, what he wanted, and how he desired to get there. Born on 11 April 1938 in Bakersfield, California, Deaver had a long association with President Reagan dating back to 1967 when he joined Governor Reagan’s staff as the coordinator of state administrative activities. Within Reagan’s White House administration, Deaver was considered a “conciliator, a facilitator and a bearer of vital messages to the president.”⁸⁰ That is likely an understatement for what Deaver really was to the President. One commentator was more correct in deciphering the relationship, arguing that Deaver was a “shadow, a surrogate son, a confidante and comforter for the President.”⁸¹ Deaver was an “uncritical admirer of Reagan” and seemed to operate “without an existence of his own” as if he thought “in terms of Reagan ... [not] in terms of Mike Deaver.”⁸² Near the end of the 1980 Presidential campaign, Deaver turned to another campaign worker and informed how he accomplished a successful relationship with the soon-to-be-President, saying, “I am Ronald Reagan. Where do you think he got most of those ideas over the years? Every morning after I get up I make believe I am him and ask what should he do and

⁷⁹ Ibid, 214.

⁸⁰ Robert Dallek, *Ronald Reagan: The Politics of Symbolism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 76.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

where should he go.”⁸³ The advice that Deaver doled out became highly valued by the President. Deaver also had the penultimate blessing of Nancy Reagan, whose opinion of people President Reagan prized more than anything.⁸⁴ After Deaver succumbed to pancreatic cancer in 2007, the former First Lady recapped that Deaver “was the closest of friends to both Ronnie and me in many ways, and he was like a son to Ronnie. We met great challenges together.”⁸⁵

Deaver was certainly a man of intense influence as the Soviet Union Olympic matter began to come to a head. However, other members of the Reagan administration saw the potential damage that not working with the Soviets could create just as well. Robert McFarlane, writing directly to the President, stated:

While our intelligence community believes that the Soviets want to participate, there is a distinct risk that if we fail to suspend our sanction and some of our normal restrictions on Soviet officials in order to permit them to support their team on a non-discriminatory basis, they will refuse to come and charge us with reneging on commitments to deal with participants on an equal basis. Given the high profile of the Olympics throughout the world, our decisions have the potential to create a major public stir if they are seen as unfairly handicapping Soviet participation and thus precipitating a Soviet refusal to attend.⁸⁶

⁸³ Ibid, 215.

⁸⁴ Charles E. Walcott, Shirley Anne Warshaw, & Stephen J. Wayne, “The Chief of Staff,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (31), no. 3 (Sept. 2001), 472.

⁸⁵ Associated Press, “Michael K. Deaver, longtime advisor to President Reagan dies,” *USA Today*, 18 July 2007.

⁸⁶ Memorandum, Robert C. McFarland to Ronald Reagan, n.d., folder “Soviet Requests for Olympics 4,” Box 7, Kenneth J. Hill Files, RRL.

The issue of allowing Aeroflot flights to enter American airspace for the Olympics was not the only ailment facing the LAOOC. Indeed, the unfortunate incident did eventually help lead President Reagan to a friendlier stance towards the Soviets. But that was still nearly four months away. In the time preceding Reagan's 1984 January reversal, the LAOOC and the American government faced challenges from both the Soviets – who still desired to berth a vessel for the Olympics and from a group named the Ban The Soviets Coalition. It was this group that led to other difficulties, including the Soviet demand to place extra financial and manpower emphasis on protecting the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games.

4.3 The Ban The Soviets Coalition (BTSC), The *Gruzia*, and Olympic Safety

In a 16 December 1983 memorandum to Michael McManus, Jay Moorhead⁸⁷ laid out the scenarios, background, and needs for the White House to fulfill the Soviet requests. First and foremost, Moorhead asked that the “Soviets requests ... be viewed as consistent with the *Olympic Charter*” and that “any country making a similar request to the U.S. government ... be handled in the same way as the Soviet request.”⁸⁸ Moorhead also informed McManus that the President's administration had to understand that any policy enacted that restricted the use of the “Soviet ship and airplanes” would likely

⁸⁷ Moorhead was appointed to Reagan's staff in 1982 as the Special Assistant to the President in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff. In this role, his responsibility was to serve as the White House coordinator for the President's Task Force on Private Sector Initiatives.

⁸⁸ Memorandum, Jay Moorhead to Michael McManus, 16 December 1983, folder “Soviets-Aeroflot and Gruzia,” Box 7, John Kenneth Hill Files, RRL.

“create a negative environment for the LAOOC and the U.S. government” and, in doing so, “create the possibility of an Eastern Bloc boycott.”⁸⁹ Doing what was necessary to accommodate Soviet requests, Moorhead argued, would show a “U.S. willingness to abide by the *Olympic Charter* and facilitate the logistical support of foreign Olympic teams.” However, Moorhead made one point to McManus that cut to the root of the Los Angeles Olympic problem. Moorhead felt that “U.S. policy regarding the Olympics (including the Olympic Family) and U.S. State Department policy regarding the Soviets should be viewed as two distinct policies.”⁹⁰ Moorhead was arguing that the shooting down of KAL 007 was a State Department problem – not an Olympic problem. Moorhead saw no reason why the KAL 007 incident should have a bearing on the planning and hosting of the Los Angeles Olympic Games.

Further, in a 23 September 1983 letter from Derwinski to Lawrence Eagleburger,⁹¹ it was noted that the California legislature passed a “resolution urging President Reagan and Congress to bar the Soviet from the 1984 Olympics” as a measure of punishment for the shooting of KAL 007.⁹² Derwinski urged Eagleburger to help steer the State Department toward abiding by the *Olympic Charter*, similar to what the LAOOC was resigned to doing. That is, for Los Angeles to host the Games, both the

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Eagleburger served as Reagan’s Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs from 11 February 1982 to 1 May 1984.

⁹² Memorandum, Edward J. Derwinski to Lawrence Eagleburger, 23 September 1983, folder “Government Relations – State Department,” Box 64, the Los Angeles Organizing Committee Records (hereafter LAOOC Records), Charles E. Young Research Library (hereafter CEYR Library), University of California at Los Angeles Special Collections (hereafter UCLASC), Los Angeles, California.

LAOOC and the American government had to “abide by the International Olympic Committee rules and bylaws.”⁹³ In doing so, Derwinski asked Eagleburger to lead the charge to separate sport and politics and to “not bar Soviet or other athletic participants otherwise eligible to enter the United States for the Olympics.”⁹⁴

With the American government not budging from its convient *Olympic Charter* stance, those American citizens against Soviet participation in the Olympic Games were forced to show the Russians that they would not be welcomed on American soil. American dissent was evident to the Russians when Soviet-flagged cargo ships were boycotted – sometimes on the verge of violence – at harbors as a way for American citizens to voice their dissatisfaction over the *Gruzia* potentially docking in Long Beach Harbor for the duration of the Olympics

The docking of the Soviet vessel at Long Beach Harbor inherently created loftier logistical complications than the acceptance of Aeroflot flights into Los Angeles International Airport, particularly as the ship was scheduled to “arrive in port [between] July 15-20 and remain there” until the Olympic flame was extinguished above the Los Angeles Coliseum.⁹⁵ With berths for 480 passengers, the vessel became a hotbed of discussion with American government officials, particularly on the subject of providing adequate security for those aboard and protecting American interests from possible high-

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Memorandum, Richard Levine to Robert C. McFarlane, 9 December 1983, folder “Olympics 1984 – USSR (2),” Box 30, John Matlock Files, RRL.

tech espionage operations originating from the ship. The White House was informed that “state and all concerned agencies, including Coast Guard [representatives from] the port security committee” were adamantly “opposed to any port call by a Soviet vessel, passenger or otherwise, during the Olympics that would involve the vessel berthing in Los Angeles/Long Beach for an extended period of time.”⁹⁶ This position changed little since 1982, when James D. Phillips, the Director for Communications and UNESCO Affairs, informed William Hussey of the LAOOC that, according to the Pentagon, the docking of a Soviet vessel set a “bad precedent for other countries who may make similar requests and [would undermine] the fraternal interaction which is part of the Olympic Village concept.”⁹⁷ As well, Phillips argued that the ship created “national security considerations in the region which would pose obstacles for a [United States government] approval of the request.”⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ James D. Phillips to William Hussey, 28 October 1982, folder “Government Relations – State Department,” Box 64, LAOOC Records, CEYR Library, UCLASC.

⁹⁸ Ibid.



Figure 4.2 – Upset Americans protested the arrival in Los Angeles Harbor the Soviet freighter *Novokuibyshevsk*. From *The Los Angeles Times*, 7 September 1983.

Indeed, the securing of the Soviet ship was going to be both a logistical and financial nightmare. This was no more apparent than seven days after KAL 007 was shot from the sky. The Soviet cargo ship, *Novokuibyshevsk*, was forced to anchor in a channel just short of the Los Angeles Harbor “after a telephone threat was made against the ship in the wake of the Soviet attack on a Korean Air Lines Boeing 747 that killed 269 people.”⁹⁹ Kenneth Cho, one of the many protestors of Korean descent, argued that, “like a grown adult who plays with a 3-year-old, the Soviets ... attacked a defenseless jet plane, and

⁹⁹ George Ramos, “Soviet Ship Focus of L.A. Harbor Protest,” *The Los Angeles Times*, 7 September 1983.

they should be punished.”¹⁰⁰ Valdis Pavlovskis, the president of the Baltic American Freedom League, swept up in the “groundswell of anger and disgust in [the] country” over the attack on KAL 007, announced his organization would “not rest until President Reagan” banned “all Soviet goods from our shores, and closes the Soviet Consulate in San Francisco.”¹⁰¹ The Baltic American Freedom League later called the Soviet Union an “outlaw nation” and organized a semi-successful vodka boycott throughout the United States.¹⁰²

With the assistance and protection of the United States Coast Guard which declared a 100-yard “safety zone” around the vessel, *Novokuibyshevsk* steamed into Los Angeles Harbor. However, the problems were not yet over. The harbor’s longshoremen – citing concerns of personal safety – refused to unload the ship’s cargo of lumber and vodka. Amid the protestor’s signs – some of which read “Communists Make Lousy Neighbors” and “Damn Russian Savagery” – Sergeant Robert Leventhal of the Los Angeles Harbor Department made it clear that it was likely the vessel would have to leave the “wharf without being unloaded.”¹⁰³ The protection of the vessel, its cargo, and

¹⁰⁰ Steven R. Churm and Steve Eddy, “Korea sympathizers protest the arrival of Soviet freighter,” *The Register*, 7 September 1983. As found in folder “OA 11518,” Linas Kojelis Files, RRL.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Newsletter, Avo Piirisild to Baltic American Freedom League membership, 1985 September, The Baltic American Freedom League Records, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota.

¹⁰³ United Press International, “Unloading of Soviet ship blocked,” *The Evening Outlook* (Santa Monica, California), 7 September 1983. As found in folder “OA 11518,” Linas Kojelis Files, RRL.

its crew required the services of dozen of armed police officers and several Coast Guard and Harbor Patrol boats.¹⁰⁴

After an eight-day ordeal, the protestors finally claimed victory. With its lumber and vodka still aboard, the Soviet vessel departed from Los Angeles in search of a friendlier port. The ordeal further underscored the need for tight security at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games. As well, it helped to drive attention to another pressing issue that both the Reagan administration and the LAOOC were facing – the Ban the Soviets Coalition.

In response to the shooting of KAL 007, four California businessmen, led by David Balsiger, formed the Ban the Soviets Coalition¹⁰⁵ on 26 September 1983. In his autobiographical sketch, Balsiger refers to himself as an “investigative researcher and author of 18 non-fiction books.”¹⁰⁶ His creation, the BTSC, was a right-wing faction composed largely of evangelical Christians and East European émigrés. It was a small but vociferous group. Balsiger, currently serving as an advertising executive who previously campaigned unsuccessfully for a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, felt that the Olympics were a chief part of Soviet foreign policy, culture, and society. The BTSC’s goal to stop the Soviets from coming to Los Angeles would be considered a damaging blow to Soviet prestige and honor.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Hereafter BTSC.

¹⁰⁶ David W. “Dave” Balsiger Biographical Sketch, n.d., folder “192867,” WHORM Subject Files: CO165, RRL. Some of his authored works included *In Search of Noah’s Ark* and *The Lincoln Conspiracy*. Balsiger also noted that he “received his Bachelor’s degree from National University and a doctorate from Lincoln Memorial University for his outstanding Lincoln assassination research.”

Balsiger started a media onslaught. Resurrecting the ghastly images of KAL 007, Balsiger argued, “those who say we would be punishing the Soviet athletes for something they didn’t do have completely forgotten that 269 civilians aboard Flight 007 were punished with death for something they didn’t do.”¹⁰⁷ The BTSC’s activities quickly gained the attention of the LAOOC and Ueberroth. Responding to the Coalition’s desires to ban the Soviets from the Games, Ueberroth reiterated that the LAOOC remained “opposed to any efforts to punish athletes for political purposes” and that “history has proven that the use and abuse of athletes for political purposes only hurts young individuals rather than achieving any political gain.”¹⁰⁸

Balsiger and his group also obtained the assistance of California Senator John T. Doolittle, who Balsiger announced as a “national co-organizer” in a 19 October 1983 press release.¹⁰⁹ Senator Doolittle successfully sponsored a resolution in the California Legislature that asked President Reagan and Congress to “take appropriate actions to ban the Soviets from the 1984 Olympic Games.”¹¹⁰ On the passage of the resolution, Balsiger remarked, “Considering that California is the host state of the 1984 Olympic Games, it took tremendous courage by Senator Doolittle and his colleagues to pass this

¹⁰⁷ Associated Press, “Proposal to Ban Soviets from 1984 Olympic Games Launched,” *The Centre Daily Times*, 27 September 1983.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Senator Doolittle Joins Ban The Soviets Coalition; Takes Off For New York and Washington To Promote Olympic Ban, 19 October 1983, folder “Ban The Soviets Coalition,” Box 1, RRL.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

resolution which we hope will become the model for other states.”¹¹¹ However, the assistance from the California state government rapidly eroded. Shortly after approving the resolution, the same lawmakers revoked it, arguing that they were “unaware of the proposed sanctions against the Soviet Union” written into the document.¹¹² Balsiger considered the backtracking legislature “sucked into becoming Soviet apologists at the beckoning of the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee.”¹¹³

Failing to succeed at the state legislative level, Balsiger turned his attention to writing letters to those in the federal government. In one such letter to Kenneth Hill – the Federal Security Coordinator for the Los Angeles Olympics – Balsiger explained:

Our Coalition efforts are focusing on getting the Soviets to voluntarily withdraw from the 1984 Summer Olympic Games, as well as encouraging the International Olympic Committee to ban them to prevent any potential outside acts of violence and terrorism that could injure or kill innocent athletes and spectators. Based on reliable information, we are concerned about the distinct possibility that the Soviets will inspire and orchestrate various terrorist activities both during and after the Games.¹¹⁴

Balsiger contended that the “various terrorist activities” would likely be carried out by the “5,000 KGB agents and operatives” that would be descending on “Southern

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Coalition Opposes New California Resolution Inviting Soviets To Olympics; Registers Protest With White House on Aeroflot Landing Requests, n.d., folder “Ban The Soviets Coalition,” Box 1, RRL.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ David Balsiger to Kenneth Hill, 20 February 1984, folder “Ban The Soviets Coalition,” Box 1, John Kenneth Hill Files, RRL. Underlined portions in original.

California disguised as Olympic spectators, with assignments to include spying, subversion, and recruitment of agents to buy, steal, or search out U.S. high technology secrets.”¹¹⁵ Balsiger ended his letter by criticizing American foreign policy for letting the Soviets succeed “in keeping Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty from covering the Sarajevo Games” and for “now [being] ready to grant unrestricted travel privileges to Soviet Olympic journalists, most of which are actually KGB agents wanting open access to high tech manufacturing areas of Southern California.”¹¹⁶

To achieve its goal, the BTSC announced a petition campaign to get 1,000,000 signatures from American citizens who wholly supported the idea of banning the Soviets from the Los Angeles Olympics. One month after the petition drive began, the BTSC had obtained only 10,000 signatures. Realizing that the swell of public opinion, partially roused by the BTSC, was not sufficient to topple Olympic plans, Balsiger again turned his indignation to those in the White House. Writing to Michael Deaver – Reagan’s Deputy Chief of Staff – Balsiger claimed that the “ethnic, religious, political, social, education, and veterans organizations” that made up the BTSC maintained “a sphere of influence that extends to 30 to 40 million people – the good people of America who still believe that principle and the value of human life takes precedence over sporting events.”¹¹⁷ Balsiger then got to the thrust of his letter, foreboding:

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ David Balsiger to Michael K. Deaver, 16 December 1983, folder “Soviet Requests for Olympics (2),” Box 6, John Kenneth Hill Files, RRL.

Needless to say, nearly all of our Coalition support groups are the same groups that made the difference in Ronald Reagan's going to the White House in 1980. They not only voted for him but were the activists who worked to turn the votes out for him at the polls. These groups supported Mr. Reagan because of his strong anti-Communist stand, his conservative platform, and his firm position on moral, family, and Judeo-Christian issues ... However, if our Coalition, its support organizations, and the millions of Americans supportive of our "ban the Soviets from the Olympics" are totally ignored and alienated by the White House, there will be a significant loss of support for the President's reelection among those grass-roots movers and shakers that really made it happen in 1980 and can make it happen again in 1984.¹¹⁸

Deaver took his time in sending his reply to Balsiger and the Coalition. Largely ignoring the BTSC's concerns, and completely avoiding the veiled threats regarding Reagan's reelection as President, Deaver remained steadfast that the *Olympic Charter* was the deciding factor in American relations with the Soviet Union vis-à-vis the 1984 Olympics, writing:

The International Olympic Committee (IOC), the body which governs all Olympic activity, awarded the 1984 Summer Olympic Games to Los Angeles on the condition required by the International Olympic Charter that all national participants recognized by the IOC be admitted to the Games. Should the United States, as host government, bar any team from participating, it could no longer be the host ... I can assure you that Federal officials plan to be completely even-handed in dealing with all participating teams, neither giving special treatment to nor imposing special conditions on any team ... We are currently studying the question

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

of travel by Soviet journalists in areas we have designated as closed to travel by Soviet official personnel in light of Olympic hosts commitments as well as of policy and security considerations.¹¹⁹

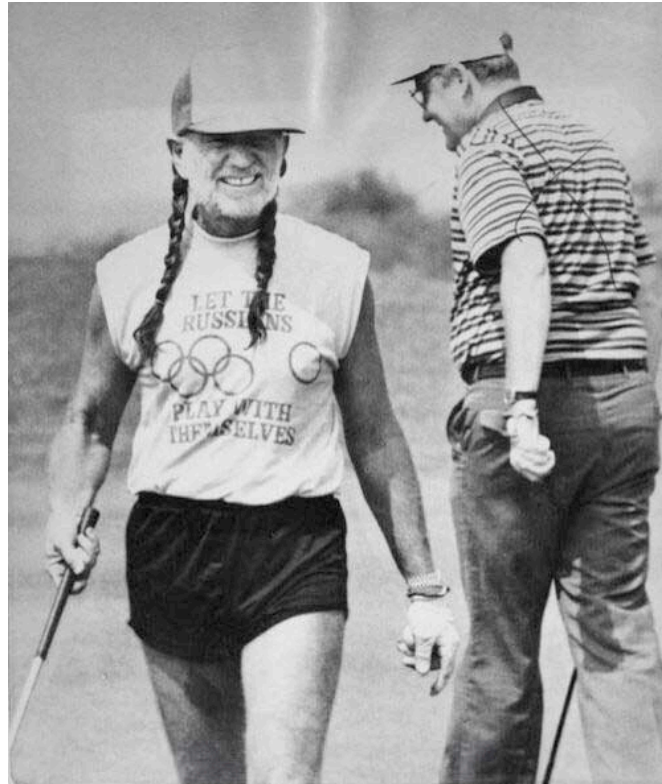


Figure 4.3 - Highwayman Willie Nelson was but one of high-profile Americans who took a stance against potential Soviet participation in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games. His shirt reads "Let The Russians Play With Themselves."

The Reagan administration had no recourse in quelling the BTSC. Protected by Constitutional rights, Balsiger and his group were free to demonstrate and protest as they pleased. The BTSC, deemed a “group of nobodies” by Ueberroth, started mailing leaflets and letters directly to Gramov, the leader of the Soviet’s state sports committee in

¹¹⁹ Michael K. Deaver to David Balsiger, 10 January 1984, folder “Soviet Requests for Olympics (2),” Box 6, John Kenneth Hill Files, RRL.

Moscow. As Ueberroth later recalled, “the literature used inflammatory language and promised to greet the Soviet athletes with anti-Soviet demonstration.” Further, “one handout ... graphically depicted an American eagle clawing the back of a Russian bear.”¹²⁰ The BTSC claimed it was only the “first of several aggressive actions” and that the group planned to continue its attempt to “directly and indirectly influence the Soviets to scuttle their Olympic participation plans.”¹²¹ Balsiger claimed that he was attempting “to tell the Soviets that they’re not really welcome here but if you do come, don’t blame us if you reap the whirlwind.”¹²²



Figure 4.4 - David Balsiger was the face of the Ban The Soviets Coalition, a collection of people dubbed by Peter Ueberroth as "nutty." From the *USA Today*, 1 May 1984.

¹²⁰ Peter Ueberroth, Richard Levin, and Amy Quinn, *Made in American: His Own Story* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1985), 236.

¹²¹ Maura Dolan, “Drive to Ban the Soviets from Olympics off to a Slow Start,” *Los Angeles Times*, 2 November 1983.

¹²² *Ibid.*

Balsiger and the BTSC's brash statements were worrisome for both the Reagan administration and the Soviet Olympic delegation. Soviets concerns over the actions of the Coalition only increased when Balsiger announced that his group planned on aiding Soviet defectors during the Olympics. The BTSC planned to post "between 25 and 50 billboards around the city, written in Russian and German, touting a toll-free telephone number for defectors to call."¹²³ The Coalition claimed to have hundreds of safe houses around Los Angeles where defectors could be "sprinted away until a press conference" was organized. As well, Balsiger claimed that members of the BTSC "infiltrated the LAOOC at the lower levels" where they could easily contact "Eastern-bloc athletes, spectators, and, to a lesser degree, journalists and security officers."¹²⁴ With the uproar over their cargo ship still a vivid memory, the Soviets requested an unprecedented amount of security to protect the ship and its athletes, but also to actively assist in avoiding Soviet defections to the West.

While the Reagan administration would soon prove to be more than hospitable in providing adequate security for the Soviet vessel, there were plans already in place to insure the safe and dignified treatment of any Eastern-bloc athlete wishing to defect. No such mention of these established procedures were public knowledge to the Soviets. In a State Department memo, Chief William DeCourcy noted that:

¹²³ Marshall Ingwerson, "Security at '84 Games: the defection brouhaha," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 30 April 1984.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

We believe a State Department representative should be present during any interrogation or de-briefing of a potential defector or asylee in conjunction with the Olympics. This would allow the State Department to determine whether or not we have an interest in a particular case and to protect those interests at a very early stage. This would also allow us to make an independent assessment of the situation in an expeditious manner and to relay information to the decision makers in the State Department.¹²⁵

As the Olympics neared, further details were provided to those working the Games. Specifically, it was instructed that “upon arrival [of the defector], the FBI should be notified” and “defectors are given a high priority and an agent” would respond nearly immediately. As well, it is highlighted that “under no circumstances should a defector be released to a representative of his country.”¹²⁶

Special interests groups also wrote to the LAOOC to insist that the organizing committee not infringe on the rights of athletes who desired to seek information regarding political asylum. In one such case, Agrupación Abdala – an anti-communist organization of primarily Cuban-born students founded in the United States in 1968 with chapters at several universities across the United States – wrote to the organizing committee to voice its concerns. Eduardo Navarro, the Attorney at Law representing Abdala, asserted that “experience has shown that frequent asylum requests have been

¹²⁵ Memorandum, Chief William DeCourcy to Ronald A. Reams (Los Angeles Field Office), 17 June 1983, folder “Asylum/Defections,” Box 1, John Kenneth Hill Files, RRL.

¹²⁶ Memorandum, C.W. Clark to All Division Commanders, Stations Commanders, and Communication, 1 August 1983, Box 1, John Kenneth Hill Files, RRL.

made by Cuban athletes during visits abroad.”¹²⁷ Navarro then extended the concerns of Abdala:

The Cuban exile community is very concerned not only for the safety of Cuban athletes but also for potential infringement on their right while in the U.S. to seek information regarding political asylum request and the honoring of such requests. Specifically we would like to know whether any organization or agency to your knowledge or under your control has made or is in the process of making any agreement with the Cuban government, or any other government or agency acting in its behalf, for the purpose of attempting to regulate said requests for political asylum.¹²⁸

While the Kremlin had its own concerns over Eastern European and other athletes under the Soviet sphere of influence seeking political asylum, a more overt issue at the moment was the safety and security of the *Gruzia* while docked in Long Beach Harbor. After the situation regarding *Novokuibyshevsk*, any concern emanating from the Kremlin was valid. The *Gruzia* was originally scheduled to utilize Berth 53 at Pier 2. The Coast Guard quickly rescinded these accommodations, arguing that Berth 52 was “easier to protect seaward, and probably more easily protected landward as well.” Further, the Coast Guard felt that Berth 52 was capable of being “completely isolated from other, ongoing commercial activities.”¹²⁹ Security personnel remained an issue. The Coast Guard recommended a security force comprised of members of the Long Beach Police

¹²⁷ Eduardo J. Navarro to Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, 18 March 1983, folder “Government Relations – State Department,” Box 64, LAOOC Records, CEYR Library, UCLASC.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Memorandum, John M. Ordway to *Remains Classified*, n.d., folder “Soviets-Aeroflot and Gruzia,” Box 7, John Kenneth Hill Files, RRL.

Department, a SWAT team, and Coast Guard patrol boats.¹³⁰ The additional manpower to adequately secure the *Gruzia* was likely to be in excess of “\$250,000 for a 30 day stay.”¹³¹ While the LAOOC was open to handling the additional expenses, the Reagan administration used the opportunity to provide the funding for the necessary security to protect the Soviet Union and its interests at the Olympic Games.¹³² Reagan’s willingness to fund the security operations to protect *Gruzia* and Soviet athletes was yet another visible sign of his desire to reach rapprochement with the Kremlin.

4.4 Reaching Compromise and Quiet Diplomacy

In a 31 January 1984 official action memorandum for the President, McFarlane outlined all the Soviet Olympic requests for the President’s final decisions. The opening of the memorandum explained to the President that all involved governmental agencies arrived at a consensus regarding the Soviet issue. First and foremost, McFarlane stated, “granting the requests for Aeroflot flights would require suspending application of sanctions applied to the Soviets following the KAL shoot-down.”¹³³ Additionally, McFarlane instructed the President that all involved agencies agreed that the Soviet requests raised “national security concerns.”

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Memorandum, Robert McFarland to Ronald Reagan, 31 January 1984, folder “LAOG Counter Intelligence & Security,” Box 9, Executive Secretariat, NSC: Subject Files, RRL.

Despite the apprehensions, the inter-agency consortium agreed on two substantial decisions. First, McFarlane expressed to the President that “all agencies recommend” that the Aeroflot flights “be granted for the specific purpose of bringing the Soviet ‘Olympic family’ to Los Angeles, but without the right to land elsewhere in the U.S. or to carry third-country passengers.” Second, the multitude of governmental agencies had no objections to “brief calls” by a Soviet vessel to “deliver and, subsequently, pick up equipment and passengers.”¹³⁴ McFarlane informed Reagan that the agencies were “strongly opposed to allowing the ship to stay at the pier in Long Beach Harbor during the Games, primarily because of the potential for electronic eavesdropping.” McFarlane provided Reagan with a counter-point to the Soviet requests, correctly stating that “no other country” had been granted “permission to keep a ship in port during the Olympics, and so long as we allow no one else in port during the Olympics ... we should be able to defend refusal of this request as non-discriminatory. Although the Soviets are likely to press the point, we believe that permission should not be granted.”¹³⁵

Directly after McFarlane presented his case, four recommendations were presented to President Reagan to either approve or disapprove with a simple checkmark and his initials. Reagan’s decisions on these recommendations undoubtedly indicate that “compromise and quiet diplomacy” weighed favorably in his thinking regarding Los Angeles Olympic matters. The recommendations, provided in their entirety, along with Reagan’s decisions and hand-written notes are as follows:

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

That the Olympic Games in Los Angeles be treated as a special event, for which every effort should be made to treat the Soviets on a non-discriminatory basis, unless overriding interests of national security require special arrangements.¹³⁶

Reagan check-marked and initialed “OK.” However, those with knowledge of the Olympic Games will certainly be aware that McFarlane’s first recommendation is loosely bound to the *Olympic Charter* in regard to the non-discrimination of any country or athlete. Reagan had already publically declared his intentions of following the *Olympic Charter* throughout the planning stages of the Los Angeles Olympics. Thus, it would have been highly unorthodox for Reagan to veto McFarlane’s first recommendation.

Reagan also approved McFarlane’s second recommendation, which read:

That Aeroflot be allowed to operate special flights to support their Olympic team, but without the right to transport third-country nationals or to land at intermediate stops in the U.S.¹³⁷

Reagan’s approval of Soviet athletes being allowed air voyage to Los Angeles via Aeroflot, despite the international sanction in place as a result of KAL 007, was a prime example of his deploying “compromise and quiet diplomacy” with the Soviet Union. Reagan’s decision on McFarlane’s third recommendation called for further cooperation with the Soviet Union. The original third recommendation read:

That the Soviet ship be allowed to enter Long Beach Harbor before and after the Olympics, but not to remain at the pier during the Games, unless such privilege is granted to other countries.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

Reagan did not approve the recommendation as written. In his handwriting, Reagan edited the proposal to read:

That the Soviet ship be allowed to enter Long Beach Harbor before and after the Games, ~~but not~~ *and* to remain at the pier during the Games *subject to the establishment of all possible measures designed to minimize intelligence loss,* ~~unless~~ *and that* such privilege is granted to other countries.¹³⁹

Reagan's decision – and subsequent edits to the recommendation – went against the advice of his administration as outlined in the introduction to the action memorandum. With the caveat of providing measures to counter intelligence loss, Reagan provided yet another compromise to the Soviet Union. Reagan's decision denied the requests made by the Central Intelligence Agency, the United States Coast Guard, and local Los Angeles law enforcement to reject the Soviet ship a stay in the Long Beach.

Despite the trepidations of his administration, Reagan made every possible effort to assure that the Soviet Union's requests were addressed and in large measure satisfied. However, Reagan's response to McFarlane's fourth recommendation is perhaps the most telling political action taken by the President to illustrate his aim for "compromise and quiet diplomacy" through the lens of the Olympic Games. The final recommendation of the memorandum read:

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid. Strikethroughs and italics indicate Reagan's edits.

That the LAOC[sic] be instructed to ask the Soviets to submit their requests through normal diplomatic channels.¹⁴⁰

Reagan check-marked and initialed “no” on the recommendation. While Reagan provided no explanation, his decision to allow the Soviet Union to deal directly with the LAOC rather than through “normal diplomatic channels,” such as the State Department, says much about the sense of trust Reagan was attempting to build with the Kremlin. Reagan further cemented his desire to reconcile with his signing of National Security Decision Directive Number 135¹⁴¹ approximately two months later. The main object of NSDD 135 read:

The United States desires the complete success of the 1984 Summer Olympic Games and seeks to ensure the full and equitable participation of all accredited members of the Olympic Family in accordance with Olympic rules and applicable laws of the United States. We will also ensure the safe passage of Soviet Aeroflot flights to and from our country and the visit of the Soviet vessel Gruzia to the Long Beach Harbor area.¹⁴²

Reagan’s friendly signals were not without stipulations. In the case of Aeroflot flights, it was required that the aircraft “be subject to boarding for Customs and other inspections as a condition for entry to the United States” and that “US Escort crews for each Aeroflot

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Hereafter NSDD 135.

¹⁴² National Security Decision Directive Number 135, *Los Angeles Olympic Games Counterintelligence and Security Precautions*, 27 March 1984, folder “NSDD 135,” Executive Secretariat, National Security Council, NSDD112-35, RRL.

flight” to “ensure Soviet compliance with all US routing procedures.”¹⁴³ In the case of *Gruzia*, it was to be treated as a “commercial ... not a public vessel” and “subject to boarding and searches at such times as necessary by the Coast Guard or other authorities.”¹⁴⁴ As well, “radio transmission from the *Gruzia*” was to be highly prohibited while it was “berthed in Long Beach Harbor.”¹⁴⁵

On 14 March 1984, Deaver wrote to Ueberroth to deliver the news. Deaver started the letter notifying it was written on behalf of President Reagan, and that he wanted to “reiterate the United State Government’s firm commitment to the complete success of the 1984 Summer Olympic Games to be held in Los Angeles.”¹⁴⁶ Deaver then informed Ueberroth that he was “pleased to inform ... that the United States Government is agreeable to a reasonable number of Olympic-related charter flights by the Soviet airlines ‘Aeroflot’ and to the berthing of the Soviet passenger vessel ‘*Gruzia*’ in Long Beach Harbor during the Games.”¹⁴⁷

Even with the quite understandable stipulations attached, Reagan’s compliance marked a significant change in position. Reagan’s decision to allow Aeroflot flights, the berthing of a Soviet vessel, including supplying the necessary funding to maintain its security, and allowing the LAOOC direct communication with the Soviet Union went

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Michael K. Deaver to Peter Ueberroth, 14 March 1984, Executive Secretariat, National Security Council Records, Folder “Olympics, Vol. 1,” Box 23, RRL.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

wholly against the wishes of several of his closest administration figures, thus further accenting his quest for compromise, understanding, and quiet diplomacy with the Soviet Union after years of extended defiance, mistrust, and misunderstanding between the two world superpowers. However, the Reagan administration's dealings with the Olympic Games – and conceding to Soviet demands – stood in evident contrast to Reagan's long-held beliefs regarding the Soviet world. And, it should be recognized that Reagan returned to a harsh view of the Soviets after the Olympic Games were concluded. Near the end of his Presidency in May 1988, Reagan spoke:

Freedom is the right to question and change established ways of doing things. It is the continuing revolution of the marketplace. It is the understanding that allows us to recognize shortcomings and seek solutions. It is the right to put forth an idea, scoffed at by the experts and watch it catch fire among the people. It is the right to dream – to follow your dream or stick to your conscience even if you are the only one in a sea of doubters. Freedom is the recognition that no single person, no single authority or government, has a monopoly on the truth, but that every individual life is infinitely precious, that every one of us put on this world has been here for a reason and has something to offer.¹⁴⁸

Without directly condemning the Soviets, Reagan implicitly made it clear that the Soviet Union lacked the basic rights and freedoms found in the West. Reagan's unfettered post-Olympics rhetoric reached its apex at Berlin's Brandenburg Gate three years after the Soviets announced their ultimate boycott of the Olympic Games. In hindsight, it is clear that despite Reagan's earlier remarks on 16 January 1983, the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic

¹⁴⁸ Robert C. Rowland & John M. Jones, *Reagan at Westminster: Foreshadowing the End of the Cold War* (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 2010).

Summer Games remained an extreme anomaly in Reagan's overall approach to the Soviet Union. After years of doing all that he could to do bring harm to the Soviet Union politically and economically, the President suddenly conceded to all the demands requested by the Kremlin in order for the Soviet Bloc to attend the international sporting festival.

There are two likely scenarios that explain why Reagan's decision regarding the 1984 Olympics largely go against the tide of his anti-communist beliefs. First and foremost, the *Olympic Charter* fundamentally dictates that neither country nor athlete can be discriminated against. More importantly, the *Olympic Charter* also states that there is to be absolutely no political interference within the Olympic Games. Despite the altruistic rhetoric of the *Charter*, the Reagan administration's eventual intrusion into Romanian politics in order to secure the country's attendance at the Olympic Games shows a general lack of caring for the *Olympic Charter* by Reagan and his men. A more likely explanation for Reagan's about-face in Soviet Union foreign policy was his sincere desire to witness California – the state that he governed prior to becoming President – host a successful Olympic festival after Jimmy Carter's Olympic boycott movement of 1980 and the financial disaster of the 1976 Montreal Olympics. It was, ultimately, Reagan who, as Governor of California, provided much more support for Los Angeles' bid for the 1976 Olympics than had President Carter at the time of the bid process. Wrote Reagan:

Thanks to its topography and climate, California has long been an international sports center. Los Angeles has the facilities and experience necessary for mounting a global athletic event of the scale of the

Olympics, and it has the population and resources to insure its success. We Californians are fully cognizant of the honor that would be accorded if Los Angeles is selected as the setting for the International Games, and sincerely hope you will extend this honor and responsibility to Los Angeles.¹⁴⁹

Regardless of President Reagan's reasoning, his handling of the Soviet demands provided the opportunity for the ideals of the Olympic Movement to rise above the Cold War ranker and rhetoric. However, it was now the Kremlin's turn to accept Reagan generosity and attend the Olympics.

¹⁴⁹ Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, *Dropping the Torch: Jimmy Carter, The Olympic Boycott, and the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 33.

Chapter 5 – And The Games Go On

“Neither we nor the Soviet Union can wish away the differences between our two societies and our philosophies, but we should always remember that we do have common interests and the foremost among them is to avoid war ... If the Soviet Government wants peace, then there will be peace. Together we can strengthen peace ... and know in doing so that we have helped fulfill the hopes and dreams of those we represent and, indeed, of people everywhere. Let us begin now.”¹

5.1 Awaiting Soviet Response

The Reagan administration laid the groundwork for the Soviet Union to attend the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Summer Games. Reagan permitted the entry of Aeroflot flights into Los Angeles despite the strict sanctions developed over the Soviet downing of KAL 007. A Soviet vessel was allowed to dock at Long Beach Harbor despite public outcry and governmental hand wringing over the possibility of Soviet espionage systems operating from the bowels of the ship. Finally, an unprecedented amount of security was projected to protect Soviet athletes from such radical groups as the Ban The Soviets Coalition. The Reagan administration could only wait and see if the Kremlin accepted Reagan’s olive branch and attend the Los Angeles Olympics.

Indeed, much was being said about the potential of a Soviet boycott. International Olympic Committee President Juan Antonio Samaranch was satisfied in his belief that there would not be another political disturbance during the Los Angeles Games, saying that the Soviet “sports leaders have shown extraordinary leadership to date in not mixing

¹ Taken from Reagan’s 16 January 1984 address on United States-Soviet relations. For the entirety of the text, please see Davis Houck and Amos Kiewe, *Actor, Ideologue, Politician: The Public Speeches of Ronald Reagan* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1993), 240-246.

sports and politics.”² Vladimir Mikoyan, the press officer of the Soviet Embassy in Washington, D.C., mirrored this sentiment, informing the public that the “boycott rumors are false. The Russian people ... do not mix sports with politics.”³ However, when the Soviet Central Committee named Oleg Yermishkin as the official Soviet Olympic attaché and submitted his credentials to Washington, they were shocked when his visa was denied on the grounds that he was a known KGB agent. Ueberroth remarked on the situation:

Most committee officials thought it should not have been at all surprising or shocking that the Soviets, who have been expressing such concern about security, would want to have an experienced security man in charge of their preparations. After all, the Israelis and Turks also had intelligence men deeply involved in the preparation of their teams.⁴

Despite the blunder on the part of the State Department, there remained optimism that the Soviets would still attend the Olympic Games – especially after receiving unilateral approval of their requests by the Reagan administration. In some cases, it was thought the Soviets would attend *not* because of Reagan’s overtures, but because “no Strasbourg goose intended to yield foie gras suitable for royal tables was ever force-fed

² Associated Press, “Soviet Union will go to Los Angeles,” *The New York Times*, 23 July 1983.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Kenneth Reich, *Making It Happen: Peter Ueberroth and the 1984 Olympics* (Santa Barbara, California: Capra Press, 1986), 216-217.

more copiously, or more carefully, than the Soviet athletes. If he does not win the gold medal, or score right up there, it is simply a failure of Russian biology.”⁵

Marat Gramov, the chairman of the Soviet Committee for Physical Culture and Sports, however, mounted a campaign of “Russian railing” over the barring of the Olympic attaché, as well as saying that the Olympic were generating nothing but “anti-Soviet propagandistic hysteria” in the Western world.⁶ The tensions between the two countries reached a climax in early April of 1984 when the Soviet National Olympic Committee called for “an emergency meeting of the International Olympic Committee” to review what it called “gross violations” of the *Olympic Charter*.⁷ The Soviets continued to complain that their athletes were likely to be “persuaded to defect” and that Los Angeles was a “center of crime and pornography unsafe for Soviet citizens.”⁸ As well, the Kremlin remained insulted over Yermishkin’s denied visa, arguing that the State Department was “refusing entry to those they considered undesirable.” And, finally, the Soviets remained convinced that “various reactionary political, émigré and religious

⁵ William F. Buckley, Jr., “Soviets’ Turn To Boycott Olympics?” *Centre Daily Times*, 12 January 1984. In his editorial, Buckley also criticized the Soviet references to the “well-documented proclivities of America to bloody massacres.” Buckley informed his readers that the Kremlin educated Soviet people that “vast interior portions of the U.S.A., as is well documented, were taken outright from defenseless Indian tribes in a series of bloody massacres during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Many gunslinging western ‘heros’ such as Alfred ‘Wild Bill’ Hitchcock and John Wayne are still revered by American schoolchildren and glorified in Hollywood films for their exploits in shooting and ‘scalping’ entire villages.”

⁶ Nancy Traver, “Soviets still debating L.A. boycott,” *Centre Daily Times*, 20 January 1984.

⁷ Gary Thatcher, “US-Soviet standoff may trip up summer Olympics in L.A.,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 10 April 1984.

⁸ Richard Own, “Russians seeks meeting over U.S. violation of charter,” *The Times*, 10 April 1984.

groups had teamed up to organize provocations and even to physically victimize Soviet officials and sportsmen.”⁹

Gramov continued to claim that a Soviet boycott of the Games was unlikely, arguing that the Soviets were “not going to boycott the Olympic Games” and the main concern of the Kremlin was “the creation of normal conditions for Soviet athletes and strict compliance with the rules of the *Olympic Charter*.”¹⁰ Despite his claims to the contrary, Gramov announced the Soviet boycott of the Los Angeles Games on 8 May 1984. The official Soviet proclamation began:

The National Olympic Committee of the USSR made an all-around analysis of the situation around the Games of the 23rd Olympiad in Los Angeles and studied the question of the participation of the Soviet sports delegation team ... the National Olympic Committee of the USSR voiced serious concern over the rude violations by the organizers of the Games of the rules of the *Olympic Charter* and the anti-Soviet campaign launched by reactionary circles in the United States with the connivance of the official authorities.¹¹

The Soviet press release continued, saying, “the cavalier attitude of the U.S. authorities to the *Olympic Charter*, the gross flouting of the ideals and traditions of the Olympic Movement are aimed directly at undermining it.”¹² The final Soviet declaration on the

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Dusko Doder, “No boycott of Games, Soviet says,” *The Washington Post*, 17 April 1984.

¹¹ USSR Declares Participation in 23rd Olympic Impossible, 8 May 1984, folder “Soviet Requests for Olympics (2),” Box 6, John Kenneth Hill Files, RRL.

¹² Ibid.

boycott issue was both historic and abrupt: “in these conditions the National Olympic Committee of the USSR is compelled to declare that participation of Soviet sportsmen in the Games of the 23rd Olympic in Los Angeles is impossible.”¹³

The official Soviet announcement was released through TASS at 10:00 am Eastern Standard Time. Only hours after the Soviet boycott was announced, IOC President Samaranch met with President Reagan in a previously scheduled meeting. The President handed Samaranch a letter to hand-deliver to Chernenko, then Soviet Premier. Reagan attempted to sway Chernenko on the issue of attending the Games, writing:

I have personally assured President Samaranch and Mr. Peter V. Ueberroth, President of the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, that the government of the United States is thoroughly committed to upholding the *Olympic Charter* and fulfilling its responsibilities as the host nation of the Games of the XXIII Olympiad. I know that you share my enthusiasm for this great sporting event, and I am looking forward to seeing all the outstanding athletes of the world marching behind their flags in Los Angeles on July 28. I consider sport to be one of the finest opportunities for people of all nations to come to know and understand each other. The American people look forward to serving as hosts for the Olympic Games and to providing an hospitable climate in which the athletes can perform to the best of their abilities.¹⁴

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ronald Reagan to Konstantin Chernenko, 2 May 1984, Executive Secretariat, Head of State Files, Box 39, RRL.



Figure 5.1 - President Reagan meets with IOC President Samaranch. Peter Ueberroth sits to the left of Samaranch. Deputy Chief of Staff Michael Deaver is to Reagan's right. From the *Los Angeles Times*, 8 May 1984.

The letter was clearly a formality at this point. Despite Reagan accommodating each and every one of their requests, the Soviets decided not to attend the Olympics largely based on the issues of security and safety. Years later, Vitaly Smirnov, one of the two Soviet members of the IOC, reminisced:

By 1984, we were at liberty to express an opinion to a degree ... My opinion was that we should go to Los Angeles. I said, 'If we don't go, we'll win nothing. If we want to achieve the political effect of sporting success, we should send our athletes.' I have to say that in Russia, the

security scare was genuine. Even my mother said to me, ‘Why are you going to America?’ Yet, I still believe we ought to be there.¹⁵

The U.S. State Department quickly countered the Soviet decision. John Hughes, speaking on behalf of the State Department, argued, “Our conscience is very clear ... the United States clearly regrets the Soviet disregard of public opinion around the world, and the charges made in the TASS statement are utterly without merit.”¹⁶ Michael Deaver solidified these claims in a letter to Peter Ueberroth that informed “details of [the] arrangements” regarding Aeroflot flights and other Soviet requests “were conveyed to Soviet Olympic and Soviet Government officials on several occasions in March and April, 1984. These Soviet officials were also invited to discuss further any specific questions or problems the Soviets might have about these arrangements. They expressed none.”¹⁷

Reagan, meeting informally with the White House press corps, provided his reaction to the Soviet withdrawal, saying:

Well, now, I am not supposed to answer any question here in this photo opportunity, but I think I can’t let that go by with saying that, like so many, I have a great feeling of disappointment. I’m sorry that they feel that way, and I think it’s unfair to the young people that have been waiting so long to participate in those Games. And it ought to be remembered by

¹⁵ David Miller, *Olympic Revolution: The Olympic Biography of Juan Antonio Samaranch* (London: Pavilion, 1992), 91.

¹⁶ Glen Dickey, “A Half-Century of Olympic Contretemps,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, 11 May 1984.

¹⁷ Michael K. Deaver to Peter Ueberroth, 14 March 1984, Executive Secretariat, National Security Council Records, Folder “Olympics, Vol. 1,” Box 23, RRL.

all of us that the Games more than 2,000 years ago started as a means of bringing peace between Greek city-states. And in those days, even if a war was going on, when an Olympic year came, they called off the war in order to hold the Games. I wish we were still as civilized.¹⁸

Secretary of State George Shultz largely agreed with Reagan's thoughts on the matter, writing:

We had, in fact, bent over backward to meet all Soviet concerns and had developed a plan for 17,000 people to be involved in Olympic security. We were prepared to spend up to \$50 million to assure security, \$1 million of which was for the Soviet delegation, including \$500,000 to be certain that the Soviet ship that was to house their officials and supporters would have the utmost security. The Soviets knew all this. Nevertheless, claiming inadequate security for their athletes, they announced that they would not attend the Olympics ... We knew security was not the problem: the Soviet action was their way of retaliating against Jimmy Carter's decision to boycott the 1980 Olympics in Moscow ... The Soviet statement implied that Moscow hoped to heighten tensions and hurt President Reagan's chances for reelection. That didn't pan out for Moscow.¹⁹

¹⁸ Informal Exchange With Reports on Soviet Withdrawal From the 1984 Summer Olympic Games, 9 May 1984, Online Digital Collection, RRL. For the entirety of the exchange, please see <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1984/50984f.htm>. It needs to be noted that Reagan's recollection of ancient Greece and the Olympics is not wholly accurate. In an oft-claimed myth, it is stated that the ancient Greeks proceeded to call a truce during the Olympic Games, thus effectively suspending all wars. Reagan's belief in this myth was slightly off base. The ancient Greeks never stopped the wars – fighting continued throughout the Olympics. However, the Olympic "truce" guaranteed only the safe passage for both athletes and spectators traveling to and from *Olympia*. For an outstanding history of Greek athletics, including information on the ancient "Olympic truce," please see Rachel Robinson, *Sources for the History of Greek Athletics* (Ares Publishers: Chicago Ridge, Illinois, 1980).

¹⁹ George Schultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: Diplomacy, Power, and the Victory of the American Deal* (New York City: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993).

The continued media campaign on the American side further commented that the government had done everything possible to avoid such a boycott scenario, including fulfilling Soviet demands. Michael Deaver, in a letter to LAOOC President Peter Ueberroth, explained that the American government kept in constant contact with the Soviets in order to dispel any myths or misunderstandings the Kremlin maintained about the hosting of the Los Angeles Olympic Games. Deaver detailed to Ueberroth in the letter that on 27 April 1984, Ed Derwinski met with Soviet Minister-Counselor Isakov “to give the Soviet Government official and direct assurances of what we were prepared to do for Soviet visitors.” It was highlighted to Isakov that “several of the proposed actions constituted major exceptions to the procedures normally followed for Soviets nationals – procedures which are instituted by the U.S. Government in reciprocity for Soviet restrictions on Americans in the USSR.”²⁰ Ueberroth was aware of the work the American government did to meet the demands of the Los Angeles Olympic Games. In a letter to Secretary of State George Shultz after the ceremonies concluded at the Los Angeles Coliseum, Ueberroth praised that the work of the White House and the Department of State “set a policy guideline for others to follow.”²¹

While it is difficult to single out individuals for praise in what was essentially a “team” effort, I do particularly wish to mention Ed Derwinski ... who together with staff members John Kimball and Susan Clark provided sensitive political estimates and advice as needed; established a

²⁰ Michael K. Deaver to Peter Ueberroth, n.d., folder “Olympics 1984 – USSR 1,” Box 30, John Matlock Files, RRL.

²¹ Peter Ueberroth to George Schultz, 31 August 1984, folder “Government Relations – State Department,” Box 64, LAOOC Records, CEYR Library, UCLASC.

network of Olympic Contact Officers at Foreign Service Posts on whom we could rely for assistance around the clock; provided essential back stopping against Soviet moves to encourage more nations to join the boycott; and last July established an Operations Center in Los Angeles to ensure that the Department could respond on the spot to pertinent problems.²²

In public, the story was much the same: the Soviet decision was inexplicable. In a press guidance sheet regarding the Soviet boycott, White House administrators were given speaking points to the most likely questions to be asked. Regarding general comments on the Soviet announcement, the official stance of the White House remained:

We regret that the Soviets have chosen to make a decision for which there is absolutely no justification. It has disappointed hundreds of millions of people around the world. President Reagan had committed the United States to live up fully to its obligations under the *Olympic Charter* as host country. The vague allegations contained in the Soviet statement provide absolutely no support for charges that the United States has not met its obligations.²³

The White House was to hold firm that the Soviet charges were “wholly without foundation,” commenting that, “in recent months, we have made exhaustive efforts to meet Soviet concerns about their participation in Los Angeles, and we have met those concerns.”²⁴ Indeed, Reagan had unilaterally approved the entry of Aeroflot flights and

²² Ibid.

²³ USSR Failure to Attend Olympic Press Guidance, n.d., folder “Olympics, Summer 1984,” OA10246, Edwin Meese III Files, RRL.

²⁴ Ibid.

the docking of a Soviet vessel, as well as authorizing a staggering sum of money to fund the security forces needed to protect Soviet athletes and interest. Because of this, the White House argued, “the Soviets have not been hindered by the United States or hampered from participating freely in the Olympics.” As well, members of the administration received instruction to remind the media of the other steps required to approve the Soviet requests, such as authorizing “entry of Aeroflot and shipping personnel in advance of the Games to do preparatory work” and undertaking “full responsibility for security of the Soviet ship at a preliminarily estimated cost of \$500,000.”²⁵ Lastly, the White House desired to emphasize that agreeing to Soviet requests was part of a greater goal of improving Cold War relations. On this topic, the general discussion points read:

It is not new for the Soviets to have done something that disappoints and shocks millions of people all over the world. We will continue our efforts to put relations with the Soviet Union on a more constructive basis for the long term. We hope they will respond. If they do not, it will be because, as with their decision to walk out of the Geneva Arms Control Talks, they have chosen the path of self-isolation and raising tensions.²⁶

The Soviet decision not to attend the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games placed the onus of examination on the Olympic Movement. Political intrusions on the Olympic Games were not new occurrences. The 1936 Olympics were largely a festival for Nazi propaganda. In 1956, Egypt, Iraq, and Lebanon all boycotted the Games in protest of the

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

Israeli-led takeover of the Suez Canal. At the same Games, Spain, Holland, and Switzerland declined to attend in an act of solidarity against the Soviet's wanton invasion of Hungary. In 1972, Palestinian terrorists massacred Israeli athletes in order to make a political statement. In 1976, several African nations boycotted after failing to get New Zealand expelled over its association with the apartheid system in South Africa. However, as noted by *The Christian Science Monitor's* Larry Eldridge, "... now that the major powers are getting into the act ... one can't help wondering where it will all end."²⁷ If the process of political implications continued to intrude on the Olympic Movement, Eldridge questioned if the Games could "survive" being treated as a "political ping-pong ball."²⁸ David Casstevens, of the *Dallas Morning News*, largely concurred with Eldridge. In an "open letter" to Chernenko, Casstevens concluded that, "the Olympics have become little more than a showcase for nationalistic bluster and political strife. The Games may not be worth saving. They're certainly not worth begging you, Mr. Chernenko, to reconsider."²⁹

The Soviets continued to insist that the decision not to attend was based on "inadequate security arrangements" and the U.S. Government's continued encouragement of "extremist organizations to create unbearable conditions for Soviet athletes." The Central Intelligence Agency disagreed with that sentiment. Along with several individuals from the State Department, the CIA concluded that the Soviets planned to

²⁷ Larry Eldridge, "Soviet pullout dims L.A. Olympics and clouds future of Games," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 10 May 1984.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ David Casstevens, "Maybe Soviets had right idea," *The Dallas Morning News*, 10 May 1984.

boycott regardless of what Reagan approved, “partly in retaliation for the American boycott of the 1980 Moscow Games.”³⁰ Meanwhile, others in the administration felt that Reagan’s generosity and approval of all Soviet requests placed the Kremlin in a compromising situation. By attending the Games, the Soviets could have been helping the President’s reelection effort.”³¹

Nonetheless, the speculation of the Olympic Movement’s demise was altogether misplaced. Hours before the Opening Ceremonies of the Los Angeles Olympic Games, President Reagan addressed American athletes at 1:52pm Pacific Standard Time at Heritage Hall on the campus of the University of Southern California. In his address, Reagan explained, “I want you to know just how proud all of us are to have you representing us. And when you see us out on the stands waving Old Glory, you know that we’re waving it for you.”³² Reagan continued:

... this year’s Fourth of July celebrations were extraordinarily joyous occasions. There is a new patriotism spreading across our country. It’s affection for our way of life, expressed by people who represent the width and breadth of our culturally diverse society. And the new patriotism is not a negative force that excludes, but a positive force, an attitude toward those things that are fundamental to America, that draws together our freedom, our decency, our sense of fair play as a people. In so many

³⁰ Bernard Gwertzman “U.S. Calls Soviet Pullout Blatant Political Action,” *The New York Times*, 9 May 1984.

³¹ Gary Thatcher, “Soviets blow a cold wind on the flame at Summer Olympics,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 9 May 1984.

³² Remarks to American Athletes at the Summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles, California, 28 July 1984, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1984/72884b.htm>.

ways, you represent this new spirit. I know I speak for all your fellow citizens – no matter what political persuasion, no matter what race or religion, no matter if poor, middle class, or affluent – when I tell you that you are our team.³³

Reagan concluded his speech by reprising one of his most recognizable film roles during his years in Hollywood – legendary Notre Dame All-American George Gipp. He asked the American athletes to set their “sights high, and then go for it” and do it “for yourselves, for your families, for your country – and will you forgive me if I just be a little presumptuous – do it for the Gipper.”³⁴ After his speech, the President traveled to the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum to open officially the Los Angeles Olympics. In doing so, Reagan became the first American President to do the honor. Afterwards, the President traveled to his ranch in Santa Barbara, California for a three-week vacation.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.



Figure 5.2 - President Ronald Reagan officially opening the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Summer Games with wife Nancy at his side. From the Official Report of the XXIIIth Olympiad.

Without the Soviet and East German athletes in attendance at the Olympics, American athletes won an enormous number of medals – just as the Soviets did when American athletes were not competing in Moscow four years earlier. The Americans especially dominated the swimming competitions. The men’s team won nine of the fifteen gold medals while the women won eleven of the fourteen. In total, the United States won a combined 174 medals, 83 of them being gold.

Aside from being yet another political intrusion on the Olympic Movement, the Los Angeles Games played a much more important – and pivotal – role in Olympic history. After being the only city to bid for the right to host the 1984 Olympics, Peter Ueberroth and his Committee were able to turn a profit off of hosting the Olympics – the first in modern history. The Olympic torch relay alone netted \$10.9 million after telecommunications company AT&T provided a “substantial sponsorship fee covering all

costs.”³⁵ The finances from the torch relay were then donated to the YMCA, Boys Clubs of America, Girls Clubs of America, and the Special Olympics.³⁶ As well, the city of Los Angeles was left with millions of dollars’ worth of new and majorly upgraded athletic facilities. Several of these facilities directly influenced major colleges and universities, such as the velodrome at California State College and the Olympic swim stadium at the University of Southern California. But, what interested other cities the most was the profit turned. Three months after the closing of the Games, Ueberroth announced that the Olympics made a profit of \$215 million. As he noted, “the surplus shocked the world.”³⁷ And, despite the Soviet-led boycott, 140 nations participated at Los Angeles – the most to that point in the history of the Olympic Games.

The success – and profit earned – spurred a rejuvenated interest in hosting the Olympic Games. In 1986, the IOC was able to pick from six cities. The list of hosting aspirants continued to increase. Eleven cities vied for the right to host the 2004 Olympics. Despite the growing profits and popularity of the Olympics, it became abundantly clear by the perceived failure of the Soviet-led boycott that these intrusions of foreign policy and relations on the Olympic Movement mattered little in world affairs.

³⁵ John MacAloon, “*This flame, our eyes: Greek/American/IOC relations, 1984-2002, an ethnographic memoir,*” in *Bearing Light: Flame Relays and the Struggle for the Olympic Movement*, ed. John MacAloon (New York: Routledge, 2013), 26.

³⁶ Reich, 369.

³⁷ Ibid.

5.2 On Reagan, Foreign Policy, and the Olympics

It is now clear that President Reagan made the decision to approve all Soviet requests for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics despite preexisting sanctions that normally would have denied such ventures. However, much of the media coverage – and some of the rhetoric emanating from the other governmental departments – argued that much of the work being done by the White House and the President complied with the *Olympic Charter*. It was a sound – and convenient – way to explain why Reagan was accommodating the Soviets so shortly after the Kremlin ordered KAL 007 shot out of the sky.

However, Reagan's decisions and actions immediately following the Soviet boycott announcement lead one to believe that he and his administration cared little, if at all, for the *Olympic Charter*. Rather, if the Kremlin could not be brought into discussions regarding better relations with the West, Reagan would use the allure of the Olympics to try to better relations with those smaller Communist countries, and those countries on the verge of coming under the Soviet sphere of influence. On 22 May 1984, Robert C. McFarlane wrote to President Reagan to get final approval on the letter to be sent to Romanian President Nicolae Ceausescu. In his confidential letter to the President, McFarlane explained that the letter was designed “to encourage Romanian Olympic participation by stressing, in part, the progress achieved in various areas of the bilateral relations” between the two countries. And, with Romania being the only Warsaw Pact country yet to officially join the Soviet Union in its boycott, it was another chance to

prove to the Kremlin that the White House was prepared to pursue better diplomacy and relations with the Communists world.³⁸ In the letter, Reagan wrote:

Our governments have consulted regularly on important multilateral issues such as various problems at the United Nations, the CDE conference in Stockholm, INF, the Middle East, and Southern Africa. We have also kept your able representative in Washington, Ambassador Malitza, informed on our continuing efforts to improve relations with the new leadership of the Soviet Union. We believe it is essential to the maintenance of peace and security that we remain in close contact with the Soviet leadership, and that the important negotiations in which we were engaged ... We welcome Romania's support for these negotiations and hope that they can be resumed soon and without preconditions.³⁹

Reagan could very well have written the same letter to the Kremlin. The shooting down of KAL 007 brought an abrupt end to several bilateral agreements between the United States and the Soviet Union – one being, for example, cultural exchanges. If the Soviet Union was not yet ready to enter reconciliatory discussions with Reagan, he was certainly going to approach those other Communist countries that still had something to gain by attending the Olympics as way to show the Kremlin – and the whole Communist world – that there was a way for democracy and Communism to coexist. Reagan's letter concluded:

³⁸ Memorandum, Robert C. McFarlane to Ronald Reagan, 22 May 1984, folder "8400229-8406115," Box 29, Executive Secretariat, Head of State Files, RRL.

³⁹ Proposed letter, Ronald Reagan to Nicole Ceausescu, 18 May 1984, folder "8400229-8406115," Box 29, Executive Secretariat, Head of State Files, RRL.

Regarding the Olympics we are hosting in Los Angeles this summer, I wish to inform you that Soviet concerns about the safety of their athletes and other participants are groundless. As you may know, I have personally assured the International Olympic Committee that the U.S. will live up to the *Olympic Charter*. The Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, in close coordination with local, state and federal authorities, is working with the utmost diligence to ensure that all legitimate requirements for the comfort and safety of visiting athletes are fully met. It is our hope that the Romanian Olympic Committee will concur in this and that the Romanian Olympic team will have the opportunity to participate in the Games this summer.⁴⁰

Peter Ueberroth and the LAOOC were eager for Romania's attendance as well.

Ueberroth was also keenly aware that Romania was under tremendous pressure from the Kremlin to toe the party line and participate in the Soviet-led boycott. In a press release for newspaper distribution, Ueberroth informed that he believed, "despite assurances to the contrary ... that intense pressure continues to be applied on other countries to join the Soviet boycott. If Romania and other countries pull out of the Games and cite the same reason as the other Eastern bloc nations, the world sports community will know that the Soviet Union has violated its hands-off pledge and is obviously intent on its unconscionable drive to damage the Olympic Movement."

In a 25 May 1984 letter to Secretary of State George Schultz, Ueberroth stated that "at a meeting of Eastern bloc sports officials in Prague early today, Romania stood tall in defense of the truth and reconfirmed its intention to participate in our Olympic

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Games. While all the other nations repeated the hollow allegations made so often in the last two weeks by the Soviet Union, Romania defended the efforts of the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee.”⁴¹ Ueberroth continued:

This was a courageous act that we praise and support. Through Olympic channels, we are redoubling our efforts to provide encouragement and assistance to the Romanian National Olympic Committee. All of us at the LAOOC hope that our government will take similar action in recognition of this bold and symbolic stroke of independence made by Romania. Mr. Secretary, kindly offer them every possible support and assistance.⁴²

Reagan and Secretary Shultz offered plenty of political support in the President’s attempt to lure Romania to the Games and prove to the Eastern Bloc – specifically the Kremlin – that continued opportunities for diplomacy and cooperation were still “alive and well” in the Cold War despite Reagan’s initial political stance on Communism. In exchange for Romania’s attendance at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, Reagan was prepared to give a year extension to Romania’s “Most Favored Nation” status, as well as “extending the bilateral commercial agreement” for another three years.⁴³ The arrangements in turn for Romanian participation continued. Once Ceausescu announced his intentions for his country to be at the Olympic Games, his case in the American

⁴¹ Peter Ueberroth to George Schultz, 25 May 1984, folder “The Los Angeles Olympic Committee,” Box 4, John Kenneth Hill Files, RRL.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Department of State Action Memorandum, 17 May 1984, as found in Harold E. Wilson, Jr., “The Golden Opportunity: Romania’s Political Manipulation of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games,” *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* 3 (1994).

Export Administration Review Board “was earmarked for special presidential attention.”⁴⁴

Romania was not the sole country on the receiving end of Reagan’s attempt to bring countries to the Olympic Games. In a memorandum from Jay Moorhead to Michael Deaver, Moorhead provided a large list of countries yet to provide any answer on whether or not they intended to participate in the Los Angeles Olympics. It was noted that the White House was contemplating “making personal visits to their embassy in Washington or to the U.N. Mission in New York.”⁴⁵

However, it was another memorandum between Moorhead and Deaver that pointed towards a more telling strategy, particularly concerning African nations. Moorhead provided Deaver a comprehensive list of all the countries in Africa that maintained an eligible National Olympic Committee. Using an asterisk to “denote first priority countries,” Moorhead marked: Ethiopia, Nigeria, Senegal, and Cameroon.⁴⁶ Of the four main priority countries, Nigeria and Senegal attended while Ethiopia and Cameroon did not. The selection of first priority countries was no coincidence; all maintained an ongoing struggle to fend off the influences of communism within their

⁴⁴ Wilson, Jr., 90.

⁴⁵ Memorandum, Jay Moorhead to Michael Deaver, 22 May 1984, folder “The Los Angeles Olympic Committee,” Box 4, John Kenneth Hill Files, RRL. The entire list of countries was: Angola, Brunei, Burma, Central Africa, Chad, Cuba, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Jordan, Kenya, Korea DPR, Kuwait, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Mozambique, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Romania, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Swaziland, Thailand, Upper Volta, Yemen Arab Republic, Yemen Democratic Republic, and Zambia.

⁴⁶ Memorandum, Jay Moorhead to Michael Deaver, 16 May 1984, folder “The Los Angeles Olympic Committee,” Box 4, John Kenneth Hill Files, RRL.

borders. In a 14 February 1984 address to the Boston World Affairs Council, Secretary Shultz explained the American government's stance on the communist encroachment of Africa:

There is no excuse for 40,000 Cuban combat troops – trained, equipped, financed, and transported by the Soviet Union – to be inserting themselves into local conflicts, thereby internationalizing local problems. This Soviet/Cuban meddling has no precedent; it distorts Africa's nonalignment; it injects an East-West dimension where none should be, making fair solutions harder to achieve. We do not view Africa through the prism of East-West rivalry. On the other hand, Africa does not exist on some other planet ... We are not the gendarmes of Africa. But to stand by and do nothing when friendly states are threatened by our own adversaries would only erode our credibility as a bulwark against aggression not only in Africa, but elsewhere. Therefore, we have been ready, together with others, to provide training and arms to help our friends defend themselves.⁴⁷

Shultz also informed in his speech that President Reagan had proposed the Economic Policy Initiative for Africa in which he asked Congress for a five-year, \$500 million guarantee to fund the program. Shultz explained the functioning of the program, saying: “the program will offer tangible support for those countries prepared to undertake the policy reforms needed to improve productivity. We will not allocate these funds in advance, but rather we will respond to constructive reforms where and when they are

⁴⁷ Proposed speech, George Shultz to Boston World Affairs Council, 14 February 1984, Executive Secretariat, Country Files, Africa, Box 2, RRL.

undertaken.”⁴⁸ Shultz did not expand on what sort of reforms the American government envisioned, but it is likely that it was left open-ended for the government’s own purposes.

Indeed, the Reagan administration very clearly offered Romania enticing political and economic assistance to gain the country’s attendance at the Los Angeles Olympic Games. There is reason to believe that certain African nations were on the receiving end of diplomatic entreaties from the Reagan administration as well.⁴⁹ The White House, for example, had been working with several African countries in the years preceding the Los Angeles Olympics in hopes of bettering trade relations. In a memorandum to Richard Allen, Charles Wick – the head of the United States Information Agency, explained:

President Felix Houphouet-Boigny (President of the Ivory Coast) is the most successful and eloquently outspoken prophet of capitalism and opponent of Soviet expansion in the continent. He has met with every President since Eisenhower, with the exception of Carter ... We are today misperceived in Black Africa as being pro-apartheid as a consequence of

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ No record exists to explain if the four African countries were provided political and economical offers in turn for attendance much like Romania did. The files that contain this information are still being processed by the U.S. State Department Archives under the auspices of a Freedom of Information Act. However, a brief exchange of letters currently in the Reagan Archives alludes to a potential point of interest on the topic. State Representative Penny Pullen wrote to President Reagan to voice her concern over “unofficial lobbyists from three major oil companies, together with the president of Nigeria, [persuading] the State Department to recommend ... the recognition of the Soviet-Cuban government of Angola.” Pullen further alluded to the power of international oil companies in several African states currently fending off Communists overthrows of the government. For the entire letter, see Penny Pullen to President Reagan, 6 January 1982, WHORM Subject Files: Country CO001 – CO050, folder “050000-089999,” RRL. Pullen received a response not from Reagan, but from Director for Southern African Affairs Daniel H. Simpson. Simpson assured Pullen that the government was “undertaking complicated diplomatic initiatives in Southern Africa designed to bring peace and stability to the region by securing the independence of Namibia long with the simultaneous removal of Cuban forces from Angola.” As well, the government was seeking the “evolution of a peaceful, stable Angola which can play a responsible role in the region.” For the complete letter, please see Daniel H. Simpson to Penny Pullen, 5 February 1982, WHORM Subject Files: Country CO001 – CO050, folder “050000-089999,” RRL.

our efforts to reassure South Africa as we pursue the goal of independence and free elections in Namibia. The misperception can damage our military ties in East Africa and our economic ties with Black Africa and has already widely benefited psychologically Moscow's hope to lead the continent toward a communist future.⁵⁰

Zick's thoughts echoed the concerns that Allen – Reagan's Assistant for National Security – submitted to Secretary of State Alexander Haig only two months earlier.

Allen insisted to the Secretary that “there are strong reasons for sending a high-level trade mission to Africa.”⁵¹ Further, Allen explained to Haig:

Nigeria has recently announced a \$150 billion 5-year development plan in which emphasis will be given to agriculture, construction, and energy. Clearly, U.S. technology can make significant contributions and help reduce our \$9.8 billion annual trade deficit with Nigeria (larger than our deficit with Japan!).⁵²

As well, Allen informed that the “undertaking” of a “number of substantial projects using capital which is accruing from a fast developing natural gas and petroleum industry” in Cameroon led to the inevitable opportunity “for U.S. companies to become established at an early point in the accelerated progress of this rich nation.”⁵³ Allen and Zick's early work regarding the African nations maintained the chance to be opportune as the post-

⁵⁰ Memorandum, Charles Z. Wick to Richard V. Allen, 28 August 1981, Executive Secretariat, Country Files, Africa, Box 1, RRL.

⁵¹ Memorandum, Richard V. Allen to Alexander M. Haig, Jr., 5 June 1981, Executive Secretariat, Country Files, Africa, Box 1, RRL.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

Olympic boycott effort constructed by the Reagan administration focused on several of the same countries.

The Supreme Council for Sport in Africa⁵⁴ remained vigilant of the USSR's boycott efforts and how it could harm the Olympic aspirations of several African countries. The Secretary General of the SCSA, Amadou Lamine, crafted a letter to the Los Angeles Organizing Committee to explain the SCSA's fundamental belief in the Olympic Movement, discoursing:

... in this turbulent world characterized by violence and areas of tension which portend an apocalyptic future, Olympism is, in our opinion, one of the rare domains in which there still can be found a glimmer of hope for a world of peace, friendship, and brotherhood and a ray of light to shine over the humankind reconciled with itself.⁵⁵

Lamine explained that the SCSA deplored the decision by the Soviet Union to boycott the 1984 Olympics and that the "Olympics without the participation of the Soviets and East Germans ... run the risk of not achieving its objectives in terms of sport performances and stakes and this, notwithstanding their universal character which will be eroded because of the absence of a large fraction of the Olympic Family." In closing the letter, Lamine asserted that the SCSA deduced that "Africa intends to participate massively in

⁵⁴ Hereafter SCSA.

⁵⁵ Amadou Lamine to Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, 15 May 1984, folder "4," Box 187, LAOOC Records, CEYR Library, UCLASC.

these Games barring any imponderable which may crop up between now and the date for the closure of the registration.”⁵⁶

Reagan’s excursions into both Romania and Africa points to an overall lack of care for following the rules of the *Olympic Charter*. Throughout the struggle to meet all Soviet requests, the White House continually promised to abide by the *Olympic Charter* and that all requests were to be granted because of it. Reagan’s main concern was granting the requests as a way to start the process of bettering the long deteriorated relations between the United States and the Soviet Union and the rest of the Communist world. This is, of course, not wholly against the *Olympic Charter*. Reagan was more than amicable regarding providing the same rights to other countries as he was granting to the Soviets. However, providing Romania with favorable trade and export conditions in turn for their promise to attend the Olympic Games is a definitive mix of politics and the Olympic Games and, thus, a gross violation of one of the main tenants of the the *Olympic Charter*. Reagan and his administration could not feign ignorance about the boundaries that were crossed – it was nothing less than a rationalized disregard for the operating rules and standards of the Olympic Games.

Despite approving the Aeroflot flights, the berthing of a Soviet vessel, and offering to finance Soviet security details upwards of \$500,000, the Soviets still decided not to attend the Games. But, the attempt to do so did have one lasting outcome. When Mikhail Gorbachev ascended to the General Secretary position on 11 March 1985 upon the death of Chernenko, he did so knowing fully well that Reagan was seeking

⁵⁶ Ibid.

reconciliation between the two countries as evidenced by his actions during the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.

The two world leaders met for the first time on 19 and 20 November 1985 in Switzerland for what was termed the Geneva Summit. There was the general belief that Gorbachev was no different than his predecessors, with Henry Kissinger arguing that “he [Gorbachev] was a protégé of Yuri Andropov, then head of the KGB, and Mikhail Suslov, then chief party ideologue.”⁵⁷ Gorbachev was another USSR leader raised in the uncertain time of Stalin’s ‘Great Terror.’ Born on 2 March 1931, Gorbachev’s home village of Privolnoye was “crude and poor” and had no basic accommodations, such as roads or electricity.⁵⁸ In his early childhood, he witnessed a “murderous famine” in his village where “thousands died, a disproportionate number of them young children.”⁵⁹ Worse, Gorbachev witnessed his paternal grandfather carted off to Siberia to cut lumber. The absence of his grandfather left a “tormented family that soon became destitute.” It was later revealed that “half the family died of starvation.”⁶⁰ It was then no surprise as to why “Gorbachev turned out to be such an unusual Soviet Communist.”⁶¹

Despite the first meeting between the two leaders lasting more than an hour over the time limit, little was accomplished. The second day of the meeting witnessed

⁵⁷ Henry Kissinger, “Danger at the Summit,” *Newsweek*, 13 October 1986, 38.

⁵⁸ Robert G. Kaiser, *Why Gorbachev Happened: His Triumphs and His Failure* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 22.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Gorbachev being “belligerent” and Reagan standing “firm.” However, the two simply meeting was a sign of positive progress in the strained international relationship. The two leaders met again on 11-12 October 1986 in Reykjavik, Iceland for the Reykjavik Summit. The meeting was, if anything, turbulent. Despite excellent progress throughout the duration of the talks, all Soviet proposals hinged on one item: “that the United States accept severe limits on the development of Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative.”⁶² It killed any progress the two leaders made at the Summit. However, the Reykjavik Summit did alter the relationship between Reagan and Gorbachev. It was noted that at the conclusion of the Summit, Gorbachev was absolutely convinced that it would “work out” between Reagan and him. No longer did he believe that “the U.S. administration is political scum that is liable to do anything.”⁶³

Just a year later, in 1987, the two signed the historic intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty, marking the first agreement between the two nuclear superpowers to reduce their arms. And then, on 12 June 1987, Reagan provided one of the enduring expressions of his desire to again provide the Western ideal of freedom and democracy to the tightly-controlled citizens of Eastern Europe. Standing at the Brandenburg Gate in the still divided Berlin, Reagan spoke to a massive gathering, and emphatically orated:

... we welcome change and openness; for we believe that freedom and security go together, that the advance of human liberty can only strengthen the cause of world peace. There is one sign the Soviets can make that

⁶² James Mann, *The Rebellion of Ronald Reagan: A History of the End of the Cold War* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 45.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 46.

would be unmistakable, that would advance dramatically the cause of freedom and peace. General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.⁶⁴

The speech – while powerful – was one of Reagan’s many artfully crafted displays of power. While making preparations for the speech, Reagan’s aides argued “aggressively” for permission to use the 196-year-old Brandenburg Gate as the backdrop for the television cameras. West German authorities were incredulous to the idea, deeming it “too gimmicky, too provocative and perhaps too dangerous.” Reagan’s people got their way, thanks in no small part to West German chancellor Helmut Kohl.⁶⁵ Two years later, largely in part due to Gorbachev’s dedication to *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, the Berlin Wall fell. And eventually so, too, did the Soviet Union. Gorbachev never deviated from his fundamental belief that the “Soviet Union could only solve its many problems if the people of the country felt a stake in the way it is run.”⁶⁶ Gorbachev expanded on this belief, saying:

This fulcrum is really to rouse people and to make use of the rich political, cultural, and scientific potential that has accumulated in our society in the years of Soviet power. In all spheres of life, including the spiritual sphere, we will have to overcome a very basic factor – alienation, which,

⁶⁴ Remarks on East-West Relations at the Bradenburg Gate in West Berlin, 12 June 1987, <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1987/061287d.htm>.

⁶⁵ Will Bunch, *Tear Down This Myth: The Right-Wing Distortion of the Reagan Legacy* (Washington, D.C.: Free Press, 2010), 24.

⁶⁶ Kaiser, 17.

unfortunately, occurs under socialism when it is deformed by authoritarian-bureaucratic distortions. Alienation ... can be overcome only [with] democratization and openness. A house can be put in order only by a person who feels he owns the house.⁶⁷

However, since the rapid liberalization of Eastern Europe collapsed the Soviet Union, Reagan's seconds-long sound bite from in front of the Brandenburg Gate has become the American "shorthand to describe the complicated fall of communism."⁶⁸ The construction of Reagan's legacy seems to dictate that the President asked for the wall to be torn down – and it simply fell.

Reagan's remarks at the Berlin Wall that afternoon did, however, provide an opportune moment for a consideration of the transpired events that ultimately permitted the President to make such comments. Indeed, it is unlikely that Reagan would have stood feet from East Germany and unequivocally asked Brezhnev to destroy the Berlin Wall. Nor would Andropov or Chernenko be any less aghast at Reagan's words. It was only as Cold War tensions tempered could Reagan do so. Ronald Reagan's use of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Summer Games as a mediator in Cold War relations served a role in tempering those tensions.

The Soviet decision to boycott the Games does not diminish the fact that Reagan's actions in the lead up to the Games demonstrate that there is much more to the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics than just a retaliatory story. From an outside perspective,

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Bunch, 25.

especially that of American media, it appeared as if Reagan's administration failed its country, its Olympic Committee, its associated athletes, and – perhaps most of all – the Olympic Movement, for not successfully luring in the Soviet Union. However, the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Summer Games did become a small part of a much larger foreign policy picture as Reagan and the Kremlin moved ever closer to the historic summits that would eventually lead to the end of the Cold War. Reagan's concessions at the Olympics were proof to the Soviet Union that, perhaps, the American President was not a “rogue cowboy” or a “raving lunatic” bent on driving international relations into a deepening of the Cold War. After all, Reagan – in his policy-shifting speech of 16 January 1984 – provided an anecdote about what American-Soviet peace could provide:

Just suppose with me for a moment that an Ivan and Anya could find themselves, say, in a waiting room or sharing a shelter from the rain or a storm with a Jim and a Sally, and there was no language barrier to keep them from getting acquainted. Would they then deliberate the differences between their respective governments? Or would they find themselves comparing notes about their children and what each other did for a living? Before they parted company they would probably have touched on ambitions and hobbies and what they wanted for their children and the problems of making ends meet. And as they went their separate ways, maybe Anya would say to Ivan, ‘wasn't she nice, she also teaches music.’ Maybe Jim would be telling Sally what Ivan did or didn't like about his boss. They might even have decided that they were all going to get together for dinner some evening soon.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Presidential Address on US-Soviet Relations, 16 January 1984, ID# SP833, [SP601-SP931], WHORM, RLL.

Reagan's political use of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games was but his first step in successfully seeing to it that Ivan and Anya, and Jim and Sally, met for dinner without fear of a life-eradicating nuclear holocaust interrupting their evening.

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