

A Roundtable on Heather Dichter, *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games: International Sport's Cold War Battle with NATO*

Jenifer Parks, Anne M. Blaschke, Kevin B. Witherspoon, John Soares, Richard Kimball,
Heather L. Dichter

Introduction to Roundtable on Heather L. Dichter, *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games: International Sport's Cold War Battle with NATO* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2021)

Jenifer Parks

When Heather Dichter embarked on writing *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games*, she could not have anticipated how prescient her study would be upon publication. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has found a renewed unity and sense of purpose, and sport has again become a key arena for diplomatic policy. In the 1960s, the focus was on Germany which lay at the heart of a divided Europe, and NATO, the Soviet bloc, and the international sporting community struggled to solve the “German question” of how to handle the existence of two separate German states. Dichter’s book takes the reader through the many intricacies of that question, demonstrating not only how the politics of the Cold War influenced sport, but how international sports in turn influenced Cold War international relations.

The “German problem” came to a head when the German Democratic Republic (GDR or East Germany) adopted a new flag and anthem and constructed the Berlin Wall. The erection of the wall, effectively cut off East German athletes from the West, and in response, NATO enacted what amounted to a ban on East German athletes traveling to international competitions in NATO countries. International sports organizations responded by downgrading competitions where East German athletes were excluded or moving competitions from NATO countries to neutral or Warsaw Pact countries, depriving host nations of the soft-power benefits of hosting major sports competitions. Meanwhile, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) deliberated whether to recognize a separate East German Olympic Committee or continue to insist on a unified German team. Once the IOC demanded a guarantee that any city hosting the Olympic Games would allow the free travel of East German athletes to the Games, NATO countries with cities bidding for 1968 Winter and Summer Games, namely the USA, Canada, France, and Norway, pressured the alliance to alter its policies on East German travel. East German officials’ attempts to use sport to legitimize their regime ultimately succeeded, and international sports precipitated the official recognition of a separate German Democratic Republic, which would go on to compete in the 1972 Summer Games in Munich under their own flag and anthem as a fully-fledged member of the Olympic Movement. How this unfolded makes for a fascinating read and a compelling discussion.

Dichter’s monograph is also timely historiographically, as scholars of sport, diplomacy, and international relations in every region have developed a renewed interest in Cold War sport.¹ However, all the reviewers of Dichter’s account praise her ability to address this era through a fresh lens. Kevin Witherspoon notes

the new ground that Dichter’s study brings to the 1968 Games, a topic that seems well-covered in the literature. Instead of retelling familiar stories like the Black Power salute or the Tlatelolco Square massacre, Dichter focuses on the maneuvering of diplomats and sports officials, as Richard Kimball notes, “describ[ing] the intersection of negotiation and politicization, but in altogether unexpected and enlightening ways.”

The reviewers are in unanimous agreement that the biggest strength of *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games*, is Dichter’s ability to synthesize mountains of correspondence and archival documents, housed in eight different countries and produced in four different languages, in a concise, clear, and illuminating way. John Soares complements “the topic deeply researched,” and Kimball commends “Dichter’s impressive research scope,” which includes foreign ministry archives from a half-dozen NATO member countries, correspondence between various diplomats and international sports organizations, IOC documents, and NATO archives, which Dichter “deeply mined,” providing “at times, the day-by-day breakdown of the ebbs and flows of negotiation.” Similarly, Anne Blaschke acknowledges how “Making sense of a web of networks . . . Dichter painstakingly explains the power dynamics at play.” Perhaps Witherspoon captures it best, remarking “One wonders how a single scholar managed to attain, digest, and bring order to such a vast and complicated tangle of correspondence.” Dichter herself acknowledges the long, meticulous, but necessary process to tell the story of the 1968 bids—“a story that could not be told with only the sport or only the diplomatic materials,” requiring, as she notes in the book, “a multilateral approach to [NATO], the German question, and international sporting events” (4). Dichter’s close reading of a variety of document sources reveals the intricacies, inconsistencies, and antagonisms between a variety of actors—municipal and national officials, sports officials, and diplomats from individual NATO countries—who all sought to use international sports to serve their own ends, showing “the many ways sport and diplomacy impact one another and have affected the trajectory of both the Olympic movement and alliance politics” (4).

Though uniform in their praise for the quality of research and analysis, reviewers of *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games*, also provide some constructive feedback. Witherspoon was left wanting more, in particular a “more thorough discussion of the ‘human stories’ of the athletes themselves, and the competitions impacted by the travel ban and other issues.” Blaschke also lamented the “top-down” approach that pays less attention to “people’s personal circumstances in consideration of their historical impact.” As Dichter, “the sport historian who rarely writes about the actual competition,” explains, the athletes affected by NATO and Eastern Bloc policies are seldom named in the sources, making it difficult to show the impact of these policies on an individual

level. Blaschke also thought the book was too narrowly focused on “quite specialized Iron Curtain sport studies history,” and thought Dichter could have done more to apply lenses of race, class, and gender to “illuminate the profound elitism of white NATO and IOC leaders in a decolonizing world.” In her generous response, Dichter agreed that she “could have done more with whiteness, wealth, and masculinity within the book,” and expressed the hope that scholars working on the period could draw from her analysis “to understand better how the white, male, and privileged international sport leaders responded” to the challenges that new officials from the global south brought into international sports.

In *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games*, Dichter delves into a particular moment in the Cold War, where western powers were moving cautiously from isolation of East Germany to engagement through détente, and she demonstrates the role of sport in accelerating that process. Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the pendulum seems to be swinging back from engagement to isolation, as Russian and Belorussian athletes have been banned from many competitions and high-profile sports events relocated out of Russia. Readers will find in Dichter’s account and the discussion surrounding it not only key insights into the intersection of sports and diplomacy during the Cold War, but also important context for understanding the current moment facing Europe, NATO, and the international sports community.

Dichter argues that although NATO took a hard line against socialist, Soviet-aligned East Germany at the height of the Cold War, sport diplomacy began to soften diplomatic attitudes after the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961.

Note:

1. In addition to numerous monographs about certain sports, specific Olympic competitions, and particular countries, a few recent collected volumes attest to the wide-ranging interest and approaches to Cold War sport. See for example, Heather L. Dichter and Andrew L. Johns, eds., *Diplomatic Games: Sport, Statecraft, and International Relations since 1945* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2014); Robert Edelman and Christopher Young, eds., *The Whole World Was Watching: Sport in the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020); Arie Malz, Stefan Rohdewald, and Stefan Wiederkehr, eds., *Sport zwischen Ost und West: Beiträge zur Sportgeschichte Osteuropas im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Osnabrück: Fibre Verlag, 2007); Evelyn Mertin and Christoph Bertling, eds., *Freunde oder Feinde? Sportberichterstattung in Ost und West während des Kalten Krieges* (Köln: Gütersloh Medienfabrik Gütersloh, 2013); Toby C. Rider and Kevin B. Witherspoon, eds., *Defending the American Way of Life: Sport, Culture, and the Cold War* (Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press, 2018); Stephen Wagg and David Andrews, eds., *East Plays West: Sport and the Cold War* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006); Philipp Vonnard, Nicola Sbetti, and Grégory Quin, eds., *Beyond Boycotts: Sport during the Cold War in Europe* (Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2019).

Review of Heather Dichter, *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games: International Sport’s Cold War Battle with NATO*

Anne M. Blaschke

In *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games*, historian and sport studies scholar Heather Dichter has undertaken an ambitious project that has cultural diplomacy implications for our time. Her monograph explores the relationship between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and Cold War sport in the 1960s. While NATO has historically been understood as a multinational Western military alliance that has no real role in cultural relationships, Dichter introduces sport as a channel of soft power within NATO and its member nations, a channel that officials hoped could be an instrument of East-West diplomacy in the wake of the division of Germany in 1955.

The cornerstone of Dichter’s book is her archival discovery corroborating the communists’ claims that NATO members politicized sport for Cold War gain. NATO “brought politics into sport,” she avers, particularly after East Germany built the Berlin

Wall in 1961 and severed sporting relations among Germans; and “NATO and its member states were incredibly concerned about, and involved themselves in, international sport” (x). She demonstrates that elite international sport—and the Olympic movement in particular—shifted the calculus of relations between NATO and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the 1960s with its demand that all athletes have free access to participation. Before that decade the Western alliance and East Germany mutually refused any cultural crossover.

Dichter argues that although NATO took a hard line against socialist, Soviet-aligned East Germany at the height of the Cold War, sport diplomacy began to soften diplomatic attitudes after the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Many nations—including NATO members—were eager to host prestigious, lucrative mega-events, such as Olympics or individual sports’ world championships, that were now broadcast worldwide several times each decade. These conflicting interests came to

a head in 1963, when the International Olympic Committee (IOC) condemned the injection of politics into sport and issued an ultimatum to the nations whose cities had applied to host the upcoming 1968 winter and summer Olympic Games: “(A)ll athletes, teams, officials, Jurys [sic], etc., from National Olympic Committees and International Federations recognized by the I.O.C. will be granted free entry without any restriction” (99). Desperate to be accepted by elite sport NGOs and to win coveted host bids despite their nations’ restrictive foreign policies, member states defied NATO’s anti-

GDR mandate and allowed East German athletes to compete at sporting events in their countries.

Not only did the resistance of municipal boosters to the inflexibility of national and NATO dictates test the quadripartite NATO states, Dichter argues, but it also afforded less powerful members like Canada and Norway more influence within the alliance. These boosters demanded that their countries’ efforts to host sporting events and reap the benefits of “nation branding” be taken seriously, and they argued that the West should do whatever it took to satisfy NGO sport powerbrokers—and by extension, Soviet-bloc rivals.

Dichter is clear on why these would-be-host countries sought more functional relations with banned states: a winning bid, at its most successful, translated into tourism spikes, financial windfalls, and international clout. These dividends hinged on hosting engrossing, suspenseful athletic contests. Therein lay the incentive to include the most talented athletes, including those who hailed from the GDR or other excluded states. Host countries wanted to offer sponsors and viewers riveting, no-holds-barred competition of the highest caliber. Yet a stick also accompanied the carrot of this opportunity for NATO members: the negative publicity that would arise from restricting rival states’ athletes from competition. Indeed, international sporting audiences and national fans alike condemned the exclusion of GDR athletes as a blunt policy that made athletes political pawns and arenas proxy battlefields.

These poor optics proved a significant incentive for NATO to soften its policies toward East Germany by the mid-1960s. Dichter is careful to remind the reader that sport is inherently political; but to sports fans in the 1960s, athletes who were denied free travel seemed arbitrary victims of an inflexible Western order. NATO mitigated its GDR travel ban in order to prevent the Soviet propaganda machine from “controlling the narrative,” which had framed the alliance’s exclusion policy as capitalist repression (168). However, all these pressures combined in 1963 to convince the member-state powerbrokers of NATO to allow all East German athletes to participate in the 1968 summer and winter games “on condition that they refrain while in NATO countries from political activities in support of the so-called DDR” (168).

The influence of sporting NGOs on multinational policy bodies such as NATO, Dichter emphasizes, persisted into the

middle of the decade. In 1965, for example, the IOC recognized East Germany as an independent nation, despite the political efforts of NATO, West Germany, and other bodies to prevent the elite sport group from bestowing legitimacy on the socialist state. For readers who may doubt the impact of athletics on this Cold War diplomacy, Dichter illuminates the impact of the IOC, an organization replete with soft power and unbound by the geopolitical politicking, on the enormously sensitive issue of GDR recognition: “Ultimately,” she writes, “the IOC could do as it pleased—or, what its dominating president wanted to do—because the organization knew every country wanted to participate in the Olympic Games” (192). Its actions helped foster the culture of détente that had begun in Europe by the late 1960s in the wake of the Mexico City and Grenoble Olympic Games.

Dichter is arguably the most venerated expert in the history of European sport diplomacy. She has been both pioneer and innovator in the field. She is, therefore, well positioned to take on this ambitious study of sport politics and NATO at the dawn of détente. This monograph builds on several of her previously published works on the subject of winter mega-events amid Cold War tensions.¹ But *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games* is much more expansive than Dichter’s previous efforts.

For starters, the breadth and depth of her archival use is remarkable, and was the key to piecing together this synthesis. Her archival work spans eight countries and multiple languages. She painstakingly explains the power dynamics at play within an immense web of sources—foreign ministry files, individual athletic federations’ records, Olympic materials, extant NATO sources, international newspapers—and makes sense of the connections among them. Her organizing principle was to take “a multilateral approach to the alliance, the German question, and international sporting events,” as that is the only approach that “demonstrates the many ways sport and diplomacy impact one another and have affected the trajectory of both the Olympic movement and alliance politics” (4). Her multilateral methodology results in an exhaustive exploration of how elite sport and the Western military alliance affected each other and, in particular, how resisting Eastern Bloc athletes’ free travel “demonstrate[d] a backfiring of soft power” for NATO nations that refused to ease their cultural restrictions on East Germany until the mid-1960s (5). As forceful as these elite powers appeared, negative publicity could strike at the cultural capital they hoped to gain from dominance in sport.

In this work, Dichter uses her skills primarily to analyze top-down bureaucracies: NATO, national security departments, the IOC, discrete sporting federations, and other organizations. Although she does discuss various leaders of these groups, such as American construction magnate and IOC president Avery Brundage, hers is not a study that draws on people’s personal circumstances in considering their historical impact. Nor does it use lenses of social history such as gender, race, or class. Dichter does note that sport leaders in her narrative “were almost always men in the 1960s,” but more attention to their whiteness, wealth, and gender would convey the reconditeness and hyper-exclusivity of the cultural diplomacy cliques that exercised their power in the IOC and elsewhere (8). Furthermore, at the same moment that sport leaders advocated for free sport for East Germans, they remained silent on the racialized imperial violence that NATO states were pursuing in Kenya, Vietnam, and other sites of revolution outside the West. Dichter could have used this broader context to illuminate the profound elitism of white NATO and IOC leaders in a decolonizing world without sacrificing her core focus on sport, North Atlantic diplomacy, and the GDR.

Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games is a specialist’s deep history. Indeed, while titles in the series of which this volume is a part—the “Culture and Politics in the Cold War and Beyond”

series at the University of Massachusetts Press—vary in topic, most take a more sweeping approach to their interpretations of Cold War political culture than we see here. While Dichter dexterously illuminates the intricate negotiations between NATO, its member states, and sport, some readers outside her particular fields of specialization may find that, once past the introduction, her level of granularity at the chapter level makes it challenging to more broadly situate the narrative within a Cold War context. A reader considering the nuclear capabilities of three NATO members in the early 1960s, for example, might wonder, when parsing out the intricate conversations between cities, nations, and NATO, why sport prestige seemed worth the trouble to global superpowers.

Other readers—deep in a mid-chapter tapestry of 1968 bids—might wonder, again, exactly why that year’s games held so much significance for these organizations. Certainly Dichter answers such queries clearly in the preface and introduction. As she writes, “while the German question formed the central problem around which NATO discussions on sport focused, the contest for the 1968 Summer and Winter Olympic host cities became the larger and more complicated issue for the alliance as it impacted more states than a sporting event in a single country did” (x). Yet the chapters quickly dive beneath the surface to focus on quite specialized Iron Curtain sport studies history.

One way in which *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games* might have been more accessible to a broader audience is if Dichter had kept some bedrock conceptual and structural narrative exposition in the chapters, along with the deep dives. She does this deftly in the conclusion, “To Grenoble and Beyond.” There she details the participation requirements, such as Olympic identity cards rather than GDR travel documents, of the East German athletes at the 1968 winter Games in Grenoble, France, as well as the gradual opportunities and pressures that had compelled NATO to admit those East Germans athletes.

In the end, Dichter boldly asserts that sport paved the road to détente in central Europe: “By 1966 the governments of both the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany had started to make public comments and outward overtures toward a loosening of the hardline Hallstein Doctrine toward the GDR. Sport provided the avenue for concrete action to achieve détente” (195). Crucially, Dichter pairs the detail with the logical attractions of sport diplomacy to Cold War states: sport was visceral and dramatic, relatively quantifiable, heavily covered by global media, and a safe arena for antagonists with nuclear capabilities to fight for dominance on the world stage.

Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games is a nuanced and fascinating window onto the role of sport in Cold War cultural diplomacy. Perhaps its greatest attraction for scholars will be its utility across fields. Historians, sport specialists, and political scientists, among other academics, should teach it in graduate seminars and will be able to draw on it for their own work. And methodologically, Dichter has crafted a model for other scholars faced with webs of interconnected alliances and legal issues.

In 2022, the applicability of Dichter’s research has been thrown into relief—first, as the IOC condemned Russia for mistreating fifteen-year-old figure skater Kamila Valieva, who competed at the Beijing Olympics despite a doping violation; and second, as sport entities from FIFA to Wimbledon banned Russian athletes from competition because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in late February. NATO’s expansion into central Europe is among Russian president Vladimir Putin’s justifications for war, and in the face of the Russian onslaught, support for Ukraine among member states’ athletes—as well as Ukrainian athletes’ strong showings in global competition—garnered more media attention than diplomats’ negotiations.

These disturbing events show the relevance of Dichter’s

research and the continued need for the multivalent expertise she and other historians of sport diplomacy can offer, as NATO continues to rely on the cultural power of sport to communicate the force of its democratic message in the twenty-first century.

Note:

1. See, for example: Heather L. Dichter, “A Game of Political Ice Hockey: NATO Restrictions on East German Sport Travel in the Aftermath of the Berlin Wall,” in *Diplomatic Games: Sport, Statecraft and International Relations since 1945*, ed. Heather Dichter and Andrew Johns (Lexington, KY, 2014); Heather L. Dichter, “Canadian Government Involvement in Calgary’s Failed 1968 Winter Olympic Bid,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 38 (2021): 1329-1349; Heather L. Dichter and Sarah Teetzel, “The Winter Olympics: A Century of Games on Ice and Snow,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 37, no. 13 (2020): 1215-1235; and Heather L. Dichter, “We have allowed our decisions to be determined by political considerations”: The Cold War German Question in the International Ski Federation,” *Sport in History* 37, no. 3 (2017): 290-308.

Review of Heather L. Dichter, *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games*

Kevin B. Witherspoon

The 1968 Olympic Games have been a popular subject of study for historians of sport, with dozens of books and articles devoted to the topic. At least three scholarly books were published in the past year alone: Harry Blutstein’s *Games of Discontent: Protests, Boycotts, and Politics at the 1968 Mexico Olympics*; Axel Elías’s *Mexico City’s Olympic Games: Citizenship and Nation Building, 1963-1968*; and Heather Dichter’s *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games: International Sport’s Cold War Battle with NATO*. One might wonder: do we really need another book about the 1968 Olympics? Dichter’s book, in particular, demonstrates that scholars are far from done with exploring these endlessly fascinating Olympics. Nearly every sentence of this important book reveals previously undisclosed information.

It should be noted that this book is not about the 1968 Olympics themselves at all. Familiar figures like Peggy Fleming, Bob Beamon, Tommie Smith, John Carlos, and Dick Fosbury do not appear in these pages. The athletic competitions are not discussed, nor are the less familiar but perhaps more important events of 1968: the Mexican student protests and the tragic massacre in Tlatelolco Square on October 2. The book is about the bidding for the games, which took place five years before the Olympics themselves. Historians have paid far less attention to this process. Importantly, Dichter focuses as much on the bid for the Winter Olympics, ultimately won by the French city of Grenoble, as she does on the Summer Olympic bid, won by Mexico City. Here again, Dichter paves new ground.

Few books in sports history canon match this volume for sheer depth of research.

Over a span of nearly twenty years, Dichter spent time in various archives in eight different countries and dozens of cities, consulting sources in at least four of the languages in which she is fluent or proficient: English, French, German, and Norwegian. She scoured not only the most prominent archives for anyone studying the Olympics—the National Archives in College Park, MD, the Avery Brundage Collection at the University of Illinois, and the Olympic Studies Centre in Lausanne, Switzerland—but also a bevy of other archives less frequently tapped by sports scholars, if at all. These include the NATO archives in Brussels; an array of records of various international sports federations;

national archives in Canada, Germany, England, and Norway; and city libraries and archives in many of the cities submitting bids for the 1968 Summer or Winter Olympics, including Detroit, Lyon, Oslo, and Lake Placid. Having studied and then worked in Canada, the United States, and the UK, Dichter is uniquely suited to undertake a project requiring this breadth of research. The impressive collection of notes and sources covers more than sixty pages at the end of the book.

The resulting narrative weaves together a complex web of correspondence drawn from these many sources. As Dichter skillfully recounts, representatives of national sporting bodies corresponded with diplomatic officials and national leaders in each of the nations involved in the bidding process. Further up the athletic food chain, Olympic officials in each nation corresponded with each other and with members of the International Olympic Committee, led in that era by the notorious Avery Brundage.

All of these athletic officials then engaged in further discussions with NATO and other government officials, who in turn held their own series of meetings and internal exchanges to determine their favored course of action. These exchanges went on throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s, the period at the heart of this book, and Dichter admirably summarizes them all in clear and orderly fashion. One wonders how a single scholar managed to gather, digest, and bring order to such a vast and complicated tangle of correspondence.

All of this dialogue involved a number of Cold War issues confronting government and sporting officials in these years, most notably the travel ban on East German athletes enforced by many nations, particularly those in NATO. International sport in this era was plagued with a plethora of vexing issues, among them the admission of Soviet and other Eastern-bloc athletes into the Olympics in the 1950s, the challenge of enforcing the rules of amateurism, and the intrusion of diplomatic crises like the Soviet invasion of Hungary and the Suez Crisis, both in 1956, which strained sporting relationships for the nations involved. Among the most difficult issues, though, was how best to handle the representation and recognition of athletes from nations divided by Cold War (or lingering World War II-era) animosities, such as North and South Korea, the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan, and East and West Germany.

The last of these is at the epicenter of this book, as Dichter has added a great deal of detail from her prior research involving sport in divided Germany—or more precisely, the all-German teams that represented both nations in the Olympics in 1956, 1960 and 1964. While the issue of German athletes had challenged international sporting leaders since the dawning of the Cold War in the mid-1940s, it came rapidly to a head after East Germany announced new national symbols, such as a flag and a national anthem, in 1959.

That issue became even more troublesome after the construction of the Berlin Wall in August of 1961. Not only did the wall bring into physical reality the metaphorical divide suggested in Winston Churchill’s “Iron Curtain” speech in 1946, it also signaled the end of free travel across the German border for all German citizens, including athletes, and that posed an existential threat to the idea of a single all-German athletic squad. Even if the Germans were to accept such a unified team as a necessity, how could the athletes train, travel, and compete together if they were not able to cross the border between the countries?

Dichter explains how this seemingly self-contained problem had a dramatic effect on international sport, as every nation hosting a significant international meet or competition had to confront the “German problem”: whether to admit East and West German athletes and, if they did, how to handle them. Dichter discusses an array of world championships and other competitions

in a variety of sports and describes how host nations such as the United States, Canada, Denmark and Norway grappled with the “German problem.” Over time, she notes, banning East German athletes from international competitions as a punishment because their government had erected a wall began to seem less justified.

In 1962 and 1963, the international press—even in the West—began to criticize the policy more frequently and called for change. International sporting events, diminished by the absence of some of the world’s best athletes, became a visible symbol of the policy’s inadequacy, and as the bidding process to host the 1968 Olympics gained momentum in 1963, those NATO nations submitting bids urged the organization to ease restrictions on travel for East German athletes. As NATO nations France and the United States faced a stiff challenge from non-NATO nation Mexico in the contest to host the 1968 Summer Olympics, the potential ban on East German athletes emerged as one issue in the back of the minds of International Olympic Committee members placing their votes. While Dichter correctly notes that a number of other issues were equally important (such as the extension of the Olympics to a Latin American and Spanish-speaking nation and the fact that Mexico was not firmly positioned in either the U.S. or Soviet sphere of influence in the midst of the Cold War), she also explains that this overt intrusion of global politics into the Olympic bidding process certainly did not help the French or American cause.

Serious sport scholars have long since accepted that sport and politics are inextricably linked. Dichter’s work shows, however, that international sport played a significant role in shaping global policy in one of the most powerful institutions in the world at that time, NATO. While adhering to a strict ban against East German travel during the years in question, NATO officials inflicted collateral damage on a number of significant international sports competitions, the cities and nations hosting them, and the athletes themselves. Such nations were not able to reap the full “soft power” benefits of hosting the events, which usually included highlighting the organizational abilities of the local and national government and shining a positive light on the nation’s people and culture. When top athletes from a nation like East Germany were not allowed to compete, and the competitions were sometimes thrown out of balance, host nations actually felt their national images suffered. Therefore, countries such as Norway, slated to host the European speed skating championships and the Holmenkollen ski festival in 1962, sought to exert whatever pressure they could to compel NATO to ease the restrictions on East German travel.

It was the Olympics, and specifically the competition to host the 1968 Olympics, that focused the most attention on the “German problem.” The IOC and its president Avery Brundage required all interested nations to provide a guarantee that athletes from all nations would be allowed to participate in an Olympic competition held in their nation. Such guarantees were not merely an athletic concern; they were a national and even international concern, as NATO nations enforced the travel ban against East German athletes. And yet athletic officials in each of the contending nations pushed their diplomats and government officials to support the guarantee, thus altering their foreign policy for the sake of hosting a sporting event. Here, Dichter powerfully demonstrates one of her core arguments: that the IOC had the power to influence global diplomacy.

Dichter has unquestionably written an important work rooted in extensive primary research. If I have any criticism, it is simply that I was left wanting more at times. Most notably, the concluding chapter, “To Grenoble and Beyond,” provides only very brief accounts of the 1968 Olympics themselves and of the lingering impact of the “German problem.” The chapter devotes only one paragraph each to the Winter Games in Grenoble, the Summer Games in Mexico City, and the 1972 Summer

Olympics, which were held in Munich. As Dichter notes, the IOC vote awarding those Olympics to Munich was held in 1966, as the “German problem” still hung over IOC decision-making. Considering the extensive detail offered throughout most of the book and Dichter’s research specialty in Germany itself, one might expect a more thorough analysis of that 1966 decision.

Similarly, at times the narrative might have benefited from a more thorough discussion of the “human stories” of the athletes themselves and the competitions impacted by the travel ban and other issues. One high point in the work, for instance, is the account of Helmut Recknagel, the (East) German ski jumper and gold medalist in the 1960 Olympics, who was unable to compete in the important 1962 Holmenkollen Ski Festival in Norway because of the travel ban. Expanding the book to include more of these accounts might have pushed up against the word limit imposed by the press or made this a different work from the one the author intended, but doing so might also have added a human element to a narrative overwhelmingly devoted to document analysis. These minor suggestions do not detract from the significance or importance of the work as written.

Readers interested in the 1968 Olympics are likely familiar with the medal-stand protest of Tommie Smith and John Carlos, other issues involving black athletes in the late 1960s, the “thin air” that contributed to memorable moments like Bob Beamon’s long jump and Lee Evans’s record-breaking four-hundred-meter sprint, and the Mexican student protests and Tlatelolco Massacre. These and other episodes are thoroughly explored in the growing body of literature devoted to this topic. *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games* is a welcome addition to this literature and offers a completely fresh approach to what we might have thought was a familiar topic.

Review of Heather Dichter, *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games*

John Soares

For those prompted to look for historical context on sports diplomacy by the “diplomatic boycott” of the Winter Olympics in Beijing and by international sports organizations’ responses to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Heather Dichter’s *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games* has arrived at a propitious moment. Dichter’s book focuses on the 1960s, when members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), led by the “Western Four” (the United States, Great Britain, France and West Germany), were looking to protest the construction of the Berlin Wall and undermine Communist East Germany’s efforts to secure de facto recognition through sport. (Disclosure: I have taken part in several conference panels with Dichter, and she co-edited two publications I contributed to, the anthology *Diplomatic Games* and a recent special issue of the *International Journal of the History of Sport*.) *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games* tells a fascinating, multi-layered story about the complexities of soft power, but it is also a cautionary tale: the dictatorships successfully deploy sport for diplomatic purposes, but the democracies’ efforts backfire on them.

As Cold War historians know, in the 1960s NATO members supported the claims of the Federal Republic (FRG) to be the only legitimate, democratically elected government in Germany, and they refused to recognize the Communist “German Democratic Republic” (GDR). Non-recognition, though, was becoming increasingly problematic as the reality of the GDR grew harder to ignore and the proliferation of newly independent nations in Asia and Africa increased the number of international actors with no stake in the German dispute. In sport, the East Germans had secured membership in a number of international

federations. Through 1964 the International Olympic Committee (IOC) insisted that “Germany” was a single area that would have to field a unified Olympic team, but the growing difficulties in making this arrangement work suggested its days were coming to an end.

The construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961 demonstrated that the GDR could not compete with the FRG for most Germans’ loyalty and could keep its people in only by physically restraining them, in violation of international agreements. In sport, though, NATO’s reaction to the wall fueled sympathy for the East. The wall put an end to most travel out of East Germany, so NATO policy was to ban travel by those the GDR wanted to send abroad. This was easy enough to do: East Germans travelling to countries that did not recognize the GDR or its passports needed Temporary Travel Documents (TTDs) from the Allied Travel Office (ATO) in West Berlin. After the wall went up, the ATO simply refused to issue TTDs in most cases, including those of athletes seeking to attend international sporting events.

East German athletes were thus excluded from international sports competitions in NATO countries, but this ended up hurting the hosts. The 1962 world skiing championships were scheduled for Chamonix, France, but the international federation stripped the event of its championship status. That year’s world ice hockey championships in Colorado Springs, Colorado, were boycotted by the USSR, Czechoslovakia and other Communist nations.

Chamonix’s downgraded event and Colorado Springs’ depleted field cost the host cities significant gate receipts and tourist income. Later that year, the world weightlifting championships were moved from Hershey, Pennsylvania, to Budapest, Hungary. It was becoming clear that NATO travel restrictions on East Germans would encourage the re-location or awarding of prestigious international events to neutral or Warsaw Pact countries. The restrictions also brought stinging criticism both internationally and domestically and stoked divisions among NATO members and between the Western Four and smaller members.

The stakes got higher in 1963 and 1964, as the IOC held its bidding process for the 1968 Summer and Winter Games. (Through 1992, both games were held in the same calendar year.) Cities from the United States, Canada, France and Norway were among those bidding, and they faced demands from the IOC that prospective host countries guarantee all qualified athletes—read: East Germans—would be admitted. As Dichter describes in detail, these four NATO members were effectively dueling with each other, along with contenders from countries that imposed no travel restrictions on East Germans. In making their case to the IOC, some of these NATO members “prioritized national self-interest” (134) ahead of alliance cohesion. Any country hoping to host the Olympics did not want to be the last one upholding NATO policy while fellow members were seeking advantage by undercutting it in their quest for the games.

The end result of the sport diplomacy described in *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games* was that NATO took a beating. Grenoble, France, was awarded the 1968 Winter Games, but first Lyon, France, and Detroit lost the Summer Games to Mexico City, in part because Mexico would be sure to allow East German athletes to compete. More problematic for the Western democracies, at its Madrid meeting in 1965 the IOC adopted a German solution that recognized a separate East German Olympic Committee within a unified German team that paved the way for future inclusion of East Germany in the Olympics on terms of full equality. In just seven years, the Olympics would see the East German flag flying, and its national anthem playing, on the soil of the Federal Republic. In effect, as Dichter puts it, “international sport . . . forced NATO to reconsider its practices in the face of a changing international reality, becoming by the end of 1968 the earliest field where NATO member states

accepted détente with East Germany” (161).

It is not the book’s point, but *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games* also serves as a useful reminder that democracies confront structural disadvantages when trying to utilize sport as a form of soft power. Political independence by sport officials and organizations was one of the stated organizing principles of the IOC; it was expected of National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and individual members. And, subject to pressure from independent media and their own voters, Western democracies (usually) delivered. Dictatorships typically did not. For example, American IOC member (and future IOC president) Avery Brundage ginned up a dispute at St. Moritz in 1948 because he believed the U.S. hockey team was insufficiently “amateur.” He valued the principle of amateur purity more than U.S. medal hopes, encouraged the creation of a second U.S. hockey team, and even threatened an American boycott of the St. Moritz Games over the issue. His effort failed, but he demonstrated the political independence the IOC expected of its members.

In a Communist system, though, it is hard to imagine an Olympic official working against his own country’s medal chances and publicly protesting the professionalism of his country’s Olympic team, as Brundage did. Significantly, IOC officials understood this reality this before they admitted the Communists. In 1950, Brundage—then the IOC vice president—

wrote to the organization’s president that “it is impossible . . . to find a NOC in any Communist country that is free and not under complete State control. If we conform to fundamental Olympic principles and follow our rules and regulations we cannot possibly recognize any Communist Olympic Committee.”¹² Rejecting Communist NOCs, though, would have made the IOC one more international organization divided by the Cold War, rather than the force for peace and understanding it aimed to be. So, not for the first time, and certainly not for the last, the IOC would hope that engagement with a dictatorship would promote positive change in that regime.

Once admitted to the Olympic movement without any meaningful concessions to what Brundage correctly identified as the IOC’s “fundamental principles” and its “own rules and regulations,” the Soviets did not buy into the IOC vision. Rather, as sports scholars have long known and Dichter reminds us, Soviet “representatives immediately attempted to take control of international federations and the IOC.” In each organization, they demanded seats on the executive committee. They also wanted Russian made an official language and Franco’s Spain expelled (197).

The IOC did not accede to all these demands, but it did permit the Kremlin to select “its” IOC member, in yet another egregious violation of IOC principles and practices. Such actions made it clear that when then-IOC president Brundage expressed concern during the flap over Berlin that the IOC might, in his words, “degenerate into a tool or weapon in the cold war” (99), he was trying to close the proverbial barn door a literal decade after the horses were gone.

Dichter reminds us that even before the Berlin Wall went up, GDR officials were claiming the presence of East German athletes on unified German Olympic teams constituted recognition of the GDR. When the ATO was refusing TTDs to athletes and sports officials, East German wrestlers submitted incomplete applications for a competition in Toledo, Ohio. Even if NATO had been granting TTDs, these forms would have been unacceptable. The transparent purpose was to generate rejections so East German propaganda hands could complain about them (55–6). In another instance, the East German ski federation declined a workaround of the NATO policy that would have permitted its members to enter Greece for an international conference, where they would have been recognized as representing East Germany. Instead, the East Germans preferred the propaganda value

of complaining about NATO's travel restrictions (60–1). And Dichter shows that the Communists did indeed reap sympathetic publicity internationally, even in Western media, because of their exclusion from international events.

The outcome of the sport diplomacy described in *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games* dramatizes what we should already know: the most attention-grabbing examples of Western politicization of sport were typically responses to serious Communist provocations, like the Berlin Wall, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, or the Soviet invasion of Hungary, which led a number of democracies to skip the 1957 world ice hockey championships in Moscow. By contrast, Communist boycotts like those of the previously mentioned 1962 world ice hockey championships and the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics were triggered not by any comparable Western offense, but by Kremlin displeasure that the democracies did not supinely acquiesce to its machinations.

In the end, as Dichter notes, East Germany's sport diplomacy successfully "pav[ed] the way for greater détente between the West and the German Democratic Republic" (ix). She concludes that "as détente became the accepted norm throughout the entire sporting community by the late 1960s, international sport provided the model that international relations in general then followed" (200). Although not integral to the book's thesis, the discussion here gives readers a useful way to think about détente in the 1970s, which did unfold in a fashion very similar to the sports détente of the 1960s.

In both cases, the Communists took advantage of systemic unfairness and Western self-criticism to make notable gains, while leaders and much informed opinion in the West kept hoping in vain for a "reciprocity" that was never forthcoming from the Communists. Washington lost a war in Vietnam and was hamstrung by a "post-Vietnam syndrome"; watched Congress kill its covert effort in Angola; sought the normalization of relations with Cuba; and undermined crucial strategic allies, who fell to anti-American groups, because of those allies' human rights records. Meanwhile, Moscow—sometimes supporting involvements initiated by their purportedly "non-aligned" Cuban friends—helped Communist groups seize power in a number of countries in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Central America and the Caribbean; stepped up the silencing of Soviet dissidents; labored to crush a genuine workers' movement in Poland; and, finally, invaded Afghanistan.

Dissatisfied by this return on détente as a geopolitical investment, American voters in 1980 handed the White House to Ronald Reagan, an unrepentant anticommunist whose harsh rhetoric and military build-up helped bring the United States and the Soviet Union perilously close to nuclear war in 1983. Détente, then, failed to deliver, leading the United States to replace it with a dangerously confrontational anti-Sovietism that many had thought terminally discredited by McCarthyism and Vietnam. For détente, as for many other policies in history, what it achieved was rather different from what its architects had imagined.

This is an interesting and useful study. It is perfectly sized (201 pages of text) for use in undergraduate courses, with well-chosen and helpful illustrations. Its chapters are clearly organized, the topic deeply researched in both foreign ministry and sport sources in an impressive number of countries and languages. Dichter makes complicated issues about an important issue in sport and Cold War history understandable. Her book commands and deserves the attention of historians interested in U.S. relations with Cold War Germany, the complexity of NATO politics, soft power in diplomacy, and the intersection of sports and international relations.

I am also pleased to say that Dichter's book teaches the value of learning from the past—an unalloyed asset for a work of history. In her closing words, she notes that "[w]hen the politically led boycotts of sporting events hit the Olympics with

the African boycott of Montreal (1976), the Western boycott of Moscow (1980), and the international Communist boycott of Los Angeles (1984), the world saw the legacy of NATO's actions and diplomatic interventions from the height of the Cold War in the 1960s" (201). Since those NATO efforts in the 1960s ended in utter failure, informed policymakers in later years might have thought better of replicating them. Happily, going forward, sports officials and would-be wielders of soft power now have this impressive book to remind them about some of the challenges lurking beneath the promise of sport diplomacy.

Note:

1. Quoted in Alfred E. Senn, *Power, Politics and the Olympic Games* (Champaign, IL, 1999), 92.

Review of Heather L. Dichter, *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games: International Sport's Cold War Battle with NATO*

Richard Ian Kimball

The title of Heather L. Dichter's smart new volume *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games: International Sports Cold War Battle with NATO* would seem to give the game away.

Surely this history will hit the sweet spot where two of the primary themes that historians have come to associate with the Olympic movement meet: the underhanded dealings that have led to the selection of Olympic host cities and the politicization of the Olympic Games.

In fact, *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games* describes the intersection of negotiation and politicization, but in altogether unexpected and enlightening ways. By keeping her focus tightly on the inner workings of NATO and internal discussions with member countries as well as the alliance's international diplomatic efforts, Dichter provides us with an in-depth and at times granular understanding of "the power

of sport to influence international diplomacy" (ix), particularly in the growing acceptance of East Germany into the community of Olympic nations between 1960 and 1968.

Dichter, an associate professor at De Montfort University in Leicester, UK, combines her dual expertise in the history of sport and diplomatic history to examine how NATO, the International Olympic Committee, international sports federations, and nation-states interacted to accrue the international prestige provided by hosting and attending international sporting events such as world championships and the Olympics. The international competitions in *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games* take place far from the playing field—the action here is found in a "web of diplomacy" (7) that consists of endless meetings at NATO headquarters and seemingly never-ending correspondence between diplomats and their home nations as well as their allies and the IOC.

Dichter's impressively broad research incorporates the foreign ministry records from six NATO nations, including domestic and international correspondence. Moreover, she has deeply mined the NATO archives and captured, at times, a day-by-day breakdown of the ebbs and flows of negotiation. Additionally, her analysis of a variety of newspapers gives a sense of the attitudes in NATO nations as well as East Germany. The records of the IOC were likewise well analyzed, although Avery Brundage is often allowed to speak for the entire Olympic movement.

Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games contains no sordid tales of the behind-the-scenes wrangling, bribery scandals, or generally illicit behavior that led to the selections of Mexico City and Grenoble as Olympic hosts for 1968. Instead, the intrigue here is found in the ongoing contest over the recognition of the German Democratic Republic (GDR, or East Germany) by the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG, or West Germany) and its NATO allies. Dichter, who has published extensively in modern

German sport history, deftly tells the story of how East Germany used international sports as the proverbial camel's nose sneaking under the tent to gain recognition as a separate and sovereign nation. Participation in international sporting events meant that other nations would have to acknowledge the East German flag, national anthem, and even passports. That was a victory on the path toward full recognition. NATO members, led by the Big Four—France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States—opposed this use of sporting “soft power” at every turn.

Beginning in 1956, an all-Germany team made up of athletes from both nations participated in international sporting events, including the Olympics. Although the East Germans continued to jockey for recognition of their own teams, the all-German approach kept the controversy at a low simmer. All of that changed in the summer of 1961, when the East German government constructed the Berlin Wall, effectively stopping the free flow of people between the two nations. NATO members reacted by creating the Allied Travel Office (ATO), which prohibited the travel of East Germans, including athletes, to or through NATO member countries.

Controlled by France, the UK, and the United States, the ATO issued Temporary Travel Documents (TTDs) to East Germans as it saw fit. The decisions to issue or withhold TTDs (and the negotiations inside NATO that often preceded them) became NATO's central sporting concern between 1961 and 1968. In her analysis of the capitulation of the West in eventually recognizing East Germany, Dichter brilliantly identifies the TTDs as the small—if squeaky—hinges upon which history turned. The travel documents may not carry the emotional and symbolic power of the black-gloved fists raised by Tommie Smith and John Carlos in Mexico City in 1968, but in Dichter's hands they become central to the story.

The author's appreciation for how international sports and politics were shaped by what would normally be mundane administrative decisions showcases her understanding of how procedures and policies shape what we see on the field or who makes it to the championship podium. Understanding how the issuance or denial of travel documents played out behind the scenes adds nuance to our comprehension of how sports become politicized by reorienting our historical lens away from athletes and political leaders and towards diplomats and internal NATO politics. These behind-the-scenes Cold Warriors used the travel documents to posture, gain symbolic victories, and realign political and diplomatic relationships in light of international athletics.

The central portion of the text revolves around the political and diplomatic gyrations within the Western alliance as well as the fraught relationship between NATO and the Soviet Bloc. For a brief time, the TTDs appeared to be the perfect vehicle both to counter the “soft power” of East German sports diplomacy and to beat the GDR at its own game by controlling travel. Almost across the board, the ATO allowed East German athletes to travel as members of all-German teams (which often used a generic German Olympic flag and played Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in lieu of either nation's national anthem). East German athletes and teams were rarely granted travel papers—a decision which often proved unpopular inside NATO as well as with non-NATO countries.

By keeping East Germans off the field, ice, and pitch, NATO appeared to be using sports to score political points. By 1962, international federations (like weightlifting) allowed championships to be held only in locations that could guarantee free travel of movement to competitors from all countries, including East Germany. This became a major concern for Western nations and was “addressed at the highest echelon of the diplomatic corps” (43).

As issues around TTDs grew increasingly controversial in the mid-1960s, diplomatic cracks appeared in NATO. Member states tried to take advantage of the “soft power” of hosting

sporting events that would parlay into greater national prestige. Canada and Norway, two smaller members on the fringe of the alliance, led the charge against restrictive TTD policies. Canada sought to enter the world stage by hosting the Olympics, while Norway wanted to maintain its superiority in world skiing by hosting European and World Championships.

It became less likely that those ambitions would be fulfilled, as athletic associations began to remove their events from NATO countries in favor of Warsaw Pact or non-aligned nations, which promised open travel for all competitors. Both Canada and Norway considered the current NATO travel restrictions damaging to their national interests and lobbied for changes in the alliance's approach. Rifts emerged in the group as sports took on increasing importance in domestic agendas. As Dichter records, much of the diplomatic discussion centered on “the general inability of NATO to exert control over international sport” (72).

Over the course of the 1960s, the power of international sport, and particularly the lure of the Olympic Games, overcame NATO's intransigence regarding free travel and led to the recognition of East Germany. The issues came to a head over the bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games. Cities from four NATO countries—Canada, France, Norway, and the United States—vied to host the 1968 games. Two obstacles stood in their way. In 1963, the IOC condemned the intrusion of politics into sports and declared that all future Olympic host cities must ensure free access to all participants. Two years later, the IOC voted to recognize East Germany as a full-fledged member of the world sporting community. If any NATO country was to have a chance at hosting the games, the alliance would have to change its tune on East German travel and participation.

Ultimately, the power of the IOC prevailed. Canada, desperate to host the Games, was willing to let the IOC, rather than NATO, decide the terms. Each of the four nations decided to follow the IOC's directives, effectively allowing “international sport to dictate the course of intra-alliance diplomacy” (120).

In the end, the price of securing the 1968 Winter Olympics—at least for Grenoble—was the termination of NATO's travel ban and, ultimately, the recognition of East Germany and a realignment of Western diplomacy. The camel was standing in the middle of the tent; sport's “soft power” had knocked down the front door of international recognition. As Dichter concludes, international sport became the “earliest field where NATO member states accepted détente with East Germany” (161). NATO, however, did survive the intense conflict “between maintaining NATO unity and [national] self-interest” in the leadup to the '68 games.

Our innocence about the relationship between sports and politics seems to be restored and then lost again with every generation (if not every Olympic cycle). From the IOC's 1963 condemnation of politics in sports to IOC President Thomas Bach's remarks on the eve of the 2021 Tokyo Olympics, when he declared that “The Olympic Games are not about politics” and the IOC “is strictly politically neutral at all times,” it is clear that there is a deep belief in the value of making statements about the non-politicization of sport, especially the Olympics. *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games* reminds us of the myriad ways that sports are about making statements that are both political and diplomatic.

Dichter's story also describes how the power games inside countries and between nations have shaped and been shaped by the sporting landscape. The runup to the selection of the 1968 Olympic host cities provides a great example of how the politics of sport influenced the internal workings of NATO in ways that bound the alliance closer together but also created openings for individual nation-state members to flout the alliance and pursue their national interest at the expense of Western unity.

Dichter's deep dive into the diplomatic side of the politicization of international sport in the 1960s shows sport to be on the leading edge of change. A willingness by NATO

By keeping East Germans off the field, ice, and pitch, NATO appeared to be using sports to score political points. By 1962, international federations (like weightlifting) allowed championships to be held only in locations that could guarantee free travel of movement to competitors from all countries, including East Germany.

members to signal through sport their readiness to recognize East Germany represents a revolution behind the scenes, driven by sport but felt throughout the corridors of power, in NATO and beyond.

Author's Response

Heather L. Dichter

First, I would like to thank Andy Johns for selecting my book for a *Passport* roundtable and Jenifer Parks, John Soares, Kevin Witherspoon, Anne Blaschke, and Richard Kimball for contributing to it. I am thrilled that all these excellent historians who work on sport enjoyed and praised *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games*. While we historians conduct extensive research for our projects, often in archives, I greatly appreciate that the reviews all highlight my multi-country, multi-lingual archival methodology and the breadth of the research I did.

Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games is the culmination of an ambitious project that required many different types of archives in several countries, but it was a story that could not be told with only the sport or only the diplomatic materials. Of course, starting this research a week after leaving Canada (two years after having received my PhD at Toronto) and with no job made the idea of a new project daunting. Thankfully, I had what I like to call my "SHAFR post-doc" to get the research underway that fall. I spent just two months in Europe, which the William Appleman Williams grant only partially covered, but it was something, and I am forever grateful to the support SHAFR provided me.

As the reviewers noted, my book is about more than just the Olympic Games. The Olympic movement cannot function without the international federations, and I am glad the reviews all recognize the important role that other sporting events, regardless of their popularity, played in this process. Kevin Witherspoon notes that he would have liked to see more of the human side of the story. Indeed, hearing from the athletes whose opportunity to compete disappeared because of NATO policies and the Communist Bloc responses would have been interesting. Rarely, though, were these athletes named, either by the East German state newspaper *Neues Deutschland* or in the often incomplete or unsubmitted Temporary Travel Documents (TTDs). Olympic and world champion ski jumper Helmut Recknagel is the notable exception here. His experiences were atypical of East German athletes denied travel to the West. He was so well known in Norway from his Holmenkollen victories in 1957 and 1960 that the Holmenkollen museum has a pair of his skis at its entrance.

Instead, the book focuses on the "behind the scenes Cold Warriors," as Richard Kimball notes, where negotiation and politicization intersect. The negotiations took place at numerous levels within and across countries, as well as between diplomats and sport leaders. As a result, international sport, which politics had long affected, now shaped international politics and diplomacy at NATO and within its member states.

As John Soares, Kevin Witherspoon, and Anne Blaschke all note, it is the interaction between sport and politics that led to the challenges NATO member states faced when trying to use international sporting events for soft power

purposes while dealing with the German problem. Sport has been accepted as a form of public diplomacy, but as I argue in the book, international politics and the rules of international federations can lead to these public diplomacy endeavors backfiring when events deplete athlete fields.

Almost all the diplomats and sport leaders in the book are white men. The only women who appear were the French representative to one NATO committee and the president of the international federation for archery (who was also the first female president of any international sport federation). Most of the sporting events impacted, too, were men's world or European championships. Sometimes these events were for both men and women, but several international federations did not yet offer championships for women.

I agree with Blaschke that I could have done more with whiteness, wealth, and masculinity within the book. Yes, my book's focus is on predominantly white countries (or white individuals within them), but the international sport leaders at the time were also elite, white, and from these same states. When NATO and international sport were dealing with the problem of East Germany in the 1960s, international sport was facing several issues from non-white populations across the world: decolonization, apartheid, a divided Korea, and the two-China problem. I hope that my book's examination of the questions surrounding Germany will help scholars working on those areas delve further into these issues to understand better how the white, male, and privileged international sport leaders responded.

While I covered only a few years in the mid-1960s, I am glad each of the reviewers could see the wider relevance of events in these years to actions elsewhere around the globe and, as John Soares in particular highlights, later in time. I had no idea just how relevant my book would be when, barely four months after its release, NATO and states excluded from international sport would dominate the news on a daily basis. The Russian invasion of Ukraine prompted Sweden and Finland to apply for NATO membership and strengthened Ukraine's and Georgia's interest in NATO membership. The organization's origins as a military alliance have come to the fore with Russia's attack on Ukraine. From a sport standpoint, Russia and Belarus (for its support of Russia) have been almost universally excluded from international sport competition, and any events that had been scheduled in those countries have been relocated elsewhere—some on short notice.¹

These actions are reminiscent of the challenges international sport faced in the 1960s. While the reviewers here have all worked on sport history themselves, I hope that their positive discussion of *Bidding for the 1968 Olympic Games* will encourage non-sport historians—whether they are interested in diplomacy, the Cold War, NATO, or just history in general—to read this book and consider additional ways in which sport plays a role in diplomacy, and how very seriously numerous foreign ministries have taken sport for decades.

Note:

1. For anyone interested in what international federations are doing with respect to Russia and Belarus, I recommend following www.insidethegames.biz for news.