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# Stymied Expectations Buenos Aires' Persistent Efforts to Host Olympic Games

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# Stymied Expectations

## Buenos Aires' Persistent Efforts to Host Olympic Games

Cesar R. Torres\*

*Argentine elites have shown interest in hosting the Olympic Games in Buenos Aires at various times during the twentieth century. Expressions of interest intensified after the creation of a stable national Olympic bureaucracy in the 1920s. The last concerted effort was the bid for the 2004 Olympics. Argentine Olympic officials have perceived the efforts to bring the Olympic Games to Buenos Aires as an important aspect of their role as promoters of the Olympic Movement. Despite this perception, the history and status of these efforts remain unclear. This article explores the failed attempts to host the Olympic Games in Argentina's capital. In doing so, it ascertains how many times Buenos Aires actually bid and clarifies the logic, conditions, and forces behind these efforts. This article shows that these efforts have served as a terrain in and through which Argentines have imagined their collective identity.*



Throughout the twentieth century, Argentine elites have attempted to prove that their country has adopted the tenets of modern civilization. Their attempts included projecting an image of Buenos Aires as a South American enclave in which Western ideals flourished. It is no coincidence then that despite Argentina's troubled history of serious political, economic and social crises, those elites coveted hosting the Olympic Games in Buenos Aires. The last concerted effort was the bid for the 2004 Olympics, ultimately awarded to and successfully staged by Athens. Buenos Aires was the only South American city among the five finalists, a fact that many *porteños*<sup>1</sup> took as a testament to the distinctiveness of their city. During the weeks before the election of the host for the 2004 Olympics in September 1997, the prospect of a Buenos Aires Olympics was a recurrent topic of discussion in Argentine society. The history of Buenos Aires' attempts to host the Olympic Games, however, was hardly mentioned.

Given that officials on the Buenos Aires 2004 bid committee frequently announced that Argentina had a long and distinguished record of involvement in the Olympic Movement, including several efforts to bring the Olympic Games to Buenos Aires, the absence of reference to these efforts was all the more intriguing. A close inspection of the Buenos Aires 2004 bid materials reveals that the emphasis on Argentina's Olympic past included broad and vague statements

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regarding Buenos Aires' efforts to host the Olympic Games. For example, although one bid document stated, "Buenos Aires applies for the fifth time,"<sup>2</sup> no details of these applications were provided. The press replicated this kind of statement. For instance, the daily *La Nación* wrote in June 1997, "The enthusiasm to be the host of the Games and the tradition of loyalty to the Olympic Movement has become evident in the four previous bids."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, a mid-1970s International Olympic Committee's (IOC) publication stated that Buenos Aires had already bid for the Olympic Games five times.<sup>4</sup> Confusingly, a Buenos Aires 2004 bid committee official claimed, after the bid failed, that the city had sought to organize the Olympic Games only four times.<sup>5</sup>

The absence of specifics regarding the city's efforts to host the Olympic Games in the Buenos Aires 2004 bid materials might have arisen from the confusion surrounding them and not from a dismissal of Olympic history. After all, officials on the Buenos Aires 2004 bid committee did not fail to mention that Argentine José B. Zubiatur was among those chosen by Pierre de Coubertin to form the original IOC in 1894.<sup>6</sup> These officials knew that although the historical arguments offered little help in securing their bid, the politics of nostalgia and Olympic romanticism warranted the trumpeting of Argentina's role in regional and global Olympic affairs since Zubiatur's days. The lacunae surrounding Buenos Aires' attempts to host the Olympic Games beg historical attention; at the very least to set the record straight. More important than merely setting the record straight, the study of these attempts illuminates the evolving character of the relationship between politics, sport, and Olympic matters in Argentina throughout the twentieth century.

The examination of Buenos Aires' multiple failed attempts to host the Olympic Games underscores complex political processes at play. In doing so, it not only ascertains how many times Buenos Aires actually bid to host the Olympic Games but also clarifies the logic, conditions, and forces that prompted sport and governmental officials as well as civic leaders to consider the city as a potentially successful host and to articulate efforts for a Buenos Aires Olympics. To comprehend the drive behind the efforts for a Buenos Aires Olympics requires the evaluation of the way in which Olympic proponents constructed legitimating narratives at both the domestic and international levels to project particular representations of Buenos Aires and Argentina. The study of Buenos Aires' bids also helps explain why these efforts eventually failed and assists in discussing whether the city could be an Olympic host in the near future.

### **Early Expressions of Interest**

Interest in the Olympic Movement arose in Argentina just a decade after Coubertin in 1894 named Zubiatur a founding member of the IOC. However, it was

not Zubiaur, who considered sport an educational tool, but the aristocratic *porteños*, a group that saw sport participation as a distinctive attribute of gentlemen, who promoted Coubertin's Games and ideology in their country.<sup>7</sup> The idea to bring the Olympic Games to the nation's capital first found expression during the early stages of Olympic diffusion in Argentina. A year after a proposal advanced by elite Argentine sporting circles that the government subsidize an official Olympic delegation to the 1908 London Olympics, the initiative was rejected by Congress.<sup>8</sup> Manifesting his admiration for physical exercises, Senator Joaquín V. Gonzalez declared to a session of the Senate:

*... their necessity is evident, given the increasing development of these healthy exercises, so prestigious in the contemporary world, for they have originated the beautiful institution of the universal olympic games, that someday must take place in the city of Buenos Aires, thus fulfilling a national wish that, evidently, is inclined to games of this kind that will influence so much the future of the Nation and the race.<sup>9</sup>*

Gonzalez's vision of Olympic Games in Buenos Aires came while informing the Senate about a proposed bill that established the festivities projected to commemorate the May 1910 centenary of Argentina's revolution for national independence. He lauded the civic virtues of physical exercises, their embrace by the Argentine people, and the hope that Buenos Aires one day would serve as host to the Olympic Games to justify the construction of "a model house for the practice of physical exercises" that would be given to the *Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima de Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires Gymnastic and Fencing Club).<sup>10</sup> Although the bill passed, the gymnasium-like building was not built. However, the centennial festivities included an extensive program of international competitions modeled after the Olympic Games commonly regarded as the *Juegos Olímpicos del Centenario* (Centennial Olympic Games).<sup>11</sup> Coubertin, ever the sentinel of everything Olympic, argued that Manuel Quintana, who had replaced Zubiaur in the IOC in 1907, "had used the term 'Olympic Games' improperly for personal publicity"<sup>12</sup> and expelled him from the committee shortly after the closing ceremony of the *Juegos Olímpicos del Centenario*. Even if this sport festival was a sign of Argentine commitment to the Olympic Movement it did not warrant, at least in Coubertin's mind, the label Olympic. That word was exclusively reserved for his "true" Olympic Games.

After the expulsion of Quintana in 1910, even though he was not replaced until 1922 by a future Argentine president, Marcelo T. de Alvear, Argentine sport officials tried—unsuccessfully—to send teams to the 1912 and 1920 Olympic Games. Early in the 1920s this failure divided the Argentine sport community, inciting complex and problematic attempts to establish an Argentine National Olympic Committee (NOC) and to secure control and access to sport. The creation of a definitive NOC in late 1923, orchestrated by Marcelo de Alvear and

Ricardo C. Aldao, a distinguished sport official associated with Alvear's ruling party, did not quell all the confrontations raging in Argentine sport but did help dispatch the first official Argentine delegation to an Olympic Games, the 1924 Paris Olympics.<sup>13</sup> This precarious stability prompted local Olympic officials to renew their hopes to organize the "true" Olympic Games. These hopes were once again linked to the construction of sport facilities on the premises of the *Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima de Buenos Aires*.



Ricardo C. Aldao (third from the right), president of both the *Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima de Buenos Aires* (1907-46) and the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* (1923-27), IOC member (1923-1949), and longtime Olympic promoter, with Argentine President José Figueroa Alcorta (fourth from the right) and other dignitaries at a reception in honor of the foreign delegations attending the *Juegos Olímpicos del Centenario* on June 25, 1910.

Ricardo Aldao, who was the president of both the *Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima de Buenos Aires* and the recently created *Comité Olímpico Argentino* (Argentine Olympic Committee), and had become the nation's second IOC member in 1923, fervently expressed to his IOC colleagues the Argentine desire to organize the Olympic Games. He did so the very first time he took part in an IOC session. While leading the Argentine team to the 1924 Paris Olympics, Aldao reported about the state of sport in his nation and

gave details of the sport facilities to be erected in his club, which he considered the "oldest and most important [institution] of our country."<sup>14</sup> He reported that the Argentine Congress, the government, and the municipality of Buenos Aires had agreed to finance a *Champ des sports* that would include a stadium for 100,000 spectators.<sup>15</sup> After elucidating the specifics of the financial arrangements, presenting the plans, and even distributing pictures of the works already in progress to the IOC assembly, Aldao grandiloquently proclaimed:

*By having this considerable and inexhaustible financial resource at its disposal, totally used to build the Stadium and its annexes, Argentina will very soon be in a position to accept without hesitation, the honor that the games of one of the next Olympiads be celebrated in Buenos Aires.*<sup>16</sup>

The Argentine press replicated Aldao's announcement. According to *La Nación*, Aldao went even further, declaring that the stadium "will soon allow Argentina to be the theater of future Olympic Games."<sup>17</sup> Interviewed by the same daily, Coubertin, who in all probability had been apprised of the stadium by future IOC President Henri de Baillet-Latour the year before,<sup>18</sup> declared that he was

*amazed by the goodness and grandiosity of the project. It will be the most complete sport facility in the world, an ideal endeavor, my dream for many years. Dr. Aldao has invited me to attend its inauguration, in the year 1928; if nothing prevents it, it will be a real pleasure to go to Buenos Aires, to be present in that transcendental act and closely appreciate the magnificent progress of the Argentine people in the area of sports.*<sup>19</sup>

As much as Coubertin praised the *Champ des sports* and its stadium, the former IOC president did not make even the feeblest remark to kindle Aldao's hope that Buenos Aires would soon organize the Olympic Games. In spite of this indicative silence and the fact that the promised massive stadium was nowhere in sight on the Buenos Aires landscape, four years after Coubertin's remarks Argentine Olympic officials renewed their proposal to bring the Olympic Games to Argentina's capital. Rather than a general announcement, this time their project had a specific date, the 1936 Olympics. Apparently, the Argentines did not need much international encouragement for their Olympic dreams.

### **The Bid Consideration for the 1936 Olympic Games**

According to IOC records, Buenos Aires had already made clear its intention to bid for the 1936 Olympics as early as 1925, but the city had neither plans nor economic guarantees.<sup>20</sup> Two years later, the city was no longer among the list of candidates, presumably because it was not supported by its government.<sup>21</sup> This warning signal was noted in Argentina. As the Amsterdam Olympics were about to get underway in late June of 1928, Aldao wrote a letter to Baillet-Latour, on his own and President Alvear's behalf, indicating their wish to nominate Buenos Aires to host the 1936 Olympics. The stadium was a recurrent issue, mentioned yet again as one of the main attractions of the proposal. In his letter Aldao insisted:

*For this period, our Capital will be in a position to count, with the Camp de Jeux currently being built, an important part of which is already functional. We will then have at our disposition a stadium that can host 100,000 spectators.*<sup>22</sup>

By then, however, Aldao and Alvear had learned, perhaps from having witnessed for a few years how the IOC conducted its affairs regarding future Olympic hosts, that a high-profile stadium was not the only element needed to impress the committee's members. This time the Argentine Olympic hopefuls assured Baillet-Latour that if the IOC accepted their proposal the Argentine government would take the necessary measures "to expedite the requirements of the Delegates and Sportsmen with respect to their travel and their stay in Argentina."<sup>23</sup> Baillet-Latour was delighted with such a generous offer coming directly from Argentina's president. The IOC president acknowledged receipt

of the bid while Aldao was informed that no decision would be made before 1931.<sup>24</sup> However, early in 1929, Aldao insisted that the IOC consider his earlier proposal if that year's IOC session would take up the question of who would host the 1936 Olympics, noting that "all necessary elements for the celebration of the XIth. Olympiad will be available by then" in Buenos Aires.<sup>25</sup> Anxious for a sign, Aldao indicated to Baillet-Latour once again in April of 1929 that Buenos Aires wanted to host the 1936 Games and remarked that the grand stadium would be ready in 1932. He also mentioned that whatever the transportation difficulties from Europe to Argentina were, they would be taken care of by the *Comité Olímpico Argentino*, supported by the Argentine government.<sup>26</sup> Although Alvear's presidential term expired in 1928, Hipólito Yrigoyen, a member of Alvear's party, won the election, which presumably provided political continuity for the project.<sup>27</sup>

When the IOC met in Berlin for its annual session in May of 1930, Buenos Aires was among the candidates to host the 1936 Olympics.<sup>28</sup> Aldao attended the session. Despite seeing Buenos Aires as a candidate for the Games, he was disturbed by what he experienced in Germany. He was displeased with the policy adopted by the IOC regarding amateurism that opposed the principle of "broken time." However, he was even more enraged with the method that the IOC leadership had used to approve it. Aldao claimed that IOC members were forced to vote the way the Executive Committee wanted and that he was not given the floor to state his ideas.<sup>29</sup> Predictably, Baillet-Latour disagreed with Aldao's views. After the 1930 IOC session, both Aldao and Alvear resigned from the committee.<sup>30</sup> Their action severed the link between the Argentines and the IOC leadership and badly compromised Buenos Aires' bid to host the 1936 Olympics. When the time to choose such a host came at the April 1931 IOC session held in Barcelona, Buenos Aires was not on the list of candidates.<sup>31</sup> In the postal vote of Mexican IOC member Miguel de Beistegui, Buenos Aires did appear as a possible candidate.<sup>32</sup> Even more paradoxically, Baillet-Latour asked Aldao and Alvear to cable their votes.<sup>33</sup> This might have been a friendly gesture indicating that they were welcomed back in the Olympic fold. Ultimately, Berlin was awarded the 1936 Olympics, and only Alvear refused to rejoin the IOC.<sup>34</sup> Alvear's decision had more to do with political developments in Argentina that eventually forced him into exile, than with Aldao's complaints.<sup>35</sup>

If the dispute Aldao and Alvear had opened with the IOC leadership had already negatively influenced any chance that Buenos Aires had in the race for the 1936 Olympics, a major political crisis obliterated the city's hopes. In September 1930, José F. Uriburu overthrew the democratically-elected government of President Yrigoyen, becoming Argentina's first *de facto* president. Argentina's political institutions were forever affected and life in the nation changed dramatically after the coup.<sup>36</sup> In spite of the political changes, it was during the

first few months of Uriburu's reign that the *Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima de Buenos Aires* officially opened new facilities at its *Champ des sports*—but not the grand stadium. During the inauguration, attended by Uriburu, Aldao thanked a former democratically-elected president, but not Alvear. He also insisted that a 100,000-seat stadium was planned, announcing that it would promptly go to a public bidding process and adding that the money available allowed it to be built in twenty months.<sup>37</sup>

Shortly after these announcements, influential French IOC member Melchior de Polignac visited Buenos Aires and praised the work of the Argentine Olympic advocates. Polignac remembered visiting “the magnificent grounds of the ‘Club de gimnasia y esgrima’ which are probably the best in the world,” adding that “This is the perfect model and Mr. Aldao, who has brought this admirable work to fruition, merits the thanks of all sportsmen.”<sup>38</sup> Polignac's accolades, like Coubertin's before, failed to mention any prospect of future Olympic Games in Buenos Aires. At the time of Polignac's visit, the colossal stadium, the centerpiece of the project, was still a dream. Unfortunately, it remained so.

### **The Bid Consideration for the 1940 Olympic Games**

By the time of the 1932 Los Angeles Olympics, the discord between the Argentine IOC members and the IOC had dissolved. Aldao was once again active in Olympic matters, Alvear had been replaced by Horacio Bustos Morón, then president of the *Comité Olímpico Argentino*, and Argentina sent a robust team to Los Angeles. While athletes competed for Olympic glory under the Californian sun, the IOC held its annual session. During IOC deliberations, Baillet-Latour announced the cities wishing to organize the 1940 Olympics. Buenos Aires made the list. Oddly, all were unofficial candidates.<sup>39</sup> Three years later, in the IOC session held in Oslo, the South American metropolis remained a candidate.<sup>40</sup> However, it seems that the candidacy received no impetus in Argentina. In a letter written to Baillet-Latour two weeks after the Oslo session, Bustos Morón, who did not attend the session, said that he and Aldao had voted in favor of Tokyo for the 1940 Olympics.<sup>41</sup> A year later, Bustos Morón reminded the IOC president that he favored Tokyo. In these interactions, Buenos Aires was not even mentioned. Given his silence regarding the city, his position in Argentine sport, and the fact that he occupied several governmental posts, it seems highly unlikely that Bustos Morón was unaware of any Buenos Aires bid.<sup>42</sup> The 1940 Games were eventually awarded to Tokyo.

In July of 1938, the Japanese, involved in a quest for military conquest, relinquished their bid for Tokyo as the site of the 1940 Olympics. The Games were first transferred to Helsinki, which had also bid for the Games, then ultimately cancelled because of World War II. Fearing the cancellation, the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* saw an opportunity to take the lead in Olympic matters. Shortly



after Adolf Hitler's Germany invaded Poland, new *Comité* president, Juan Carlos Palacios, wrote to F. W. Rubien, secretary of the American Olympic Association, proposing:

*In view of the probable suspension of the XII Olympic Games in Finland, due to European situation, this Argentinian Olympic Committee believes that the efforts of the nations of America... could be applied in the meantime through a tournament to be effected based on the sports included in the mentioned games.*<sup>43</sup>

Originally, Palacios referred to the tournament as the "Pan-American Olympic Tournament" and then simply as the "Pan-American Games."<sup>44</sup> The event would take place only if plans for the 1940 Olympics were abandoned. The Argentines proposed to host a congress in Buenos Aires in February 1940 to organize hemispheric sport matters 1940 and, subsequently, the hemispheric competitions in November. To accommodate the greatest number of national delegates, the congress was first postponed to April, then to August.<sup>45</sup> The First Pan-American Congress established the Pan-American Sports Committee and decided to host Pan-American Games every four years, starting in Buenos Aires in 1942.<sup>46</sup>

The Argentines immediately started to work with great industry to organize the Games. They established the Games' organizing committee and set the festival from November 21 to December 6. Argentine President Roberto Ortiz and Buenos Aires Mayor Carlos Pueyrredon were respectively named honorary president and vice-president of the organizing committee.<sup>47</sup> The impressive plans included an "Olympic city" and "a stadium with a capacity for 75,000 spectators."<sup>48</sup> The organizing committee expected to welcome "not less than 2,000 athletes."<sup>49</sup> Everything appeared to progress well until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, which prompted the United States to enter the war. With the expansion of the conflict into the Western Hemisphere, many nations declined to participate in the 1942 Pan-American Games. The Argentines postponed the Games several times in the hope of saving the project, but to no avail; the war, and the harsh political, economic, and social conditions it imposed proved an insurmountable challenge for Olympic enthusiasts.<sup>50</sup> In spite of the setback, the Argentine post-war political environment would soon help renovate hopes of staging the first Pan-American Games in Buenos Aires. Argentines even dreamed of bringing the 1956 Olympics to their city.

### **The Bid for the 1956 Olympic Games**

The rise of Juan D. Perón to the presidency of Argentina in 1946 marked a dramatic shift in national politics. Attempting to break with the past, Perón promised the masses "a New Argentina based on social justice, political sovereignty,

and economic independence.”<sup>51</sup> His concept of social justice included an innovative array of benefits and services for the working class. Broad access to sport and physical education was a centerpiece among those innovations. Likewise, Perón did not spare resources to advance elite sport. The emphasis placed on popular and elite sport by Perón and the political return he expected from it, was without precedent in Argentinian history. In this regard, political scientist Raanan Rein has observed, “no Argentine government prior to Perón . . . invested as much effort and as many resources in both the development and encouragement of sport and in the effort to earn political dividends from this policy.”<sup>52</sup> In the context of Perón’s “New Argentina,” the hope to host the Olympic Games in Buenos Aires was not only rekindled but received a degree of state commitment never seen before in Argentina.

On January 20, 1948, a year and a half into Perón’s first term in office, the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* sent a cable and a letter to the IOC announcing that Buenos Aires wanted to organize the 1956 Olympics.<sup>53</sup> A week later, IOC member Bustos Morón cabled the IOC backing up the city’s candidacy. Aldao was also a keen supporter.<sup>54</sup> Before the end of the month, Ricardo Sanchez de Bustamante, then presiding over the *Comité*, wrote to Sigfrid Edstrøm, Baillet-Latour’s successor as IOC president, a ten-page letter detailing the rationale for Buenos Aires’ bid. For the Argentine Olympic official, Buenos Aires was suited to host the 1956 Olympics because of the *Comité’s* dedication to the Olympic Movement since its creation in 1923, the national sport organization and the extended practice of sport in Argentina, and the governmental support to sport. On the other hand, the government had pledged all necessary moral and material support for the success of the event, including a national stadium, an Olympic village, and other required facilities. Finally, there was a question of principle: since no South American city had hosted the Games, Argentina deserved that privilege. For the *Comité*, if the IOC voted for Buenos Aires, it would “satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the government of His Excellency the President General Juan D. Perón and that of the sportsmen of the continent.”<sup>55</sup> At least in Argentine rhetoric, bringing the Games to Buenos Aires fulfilled both a national and a South American desire.

According to Argentine Olympic officials, General Santos V. Rossi, president of the *Consejo Nacional de Educación Física* (National Council of Physical Education), created under the auspices of Perón, instructed the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* to communicate to the IOC that Buenos Aires wanted to host the 1956 Olympics.<sup>56</sup> Undoubtedly, the matter was of utmost importance to the government’s highest echelon. Indeed, the *Comité* later admitted that the bid simply reinforced the explicit desire of Perón.<sup>57</sup> In June of 1948, Aldao and Bustos Morón sent a letter to their IOC peers to their peers that they had previously sent to Edstrøm detailing Buenos Aires’ bid. The Argentines affirmed, “we have every reason to expect that the Argentine Government would

grant the necessary support to permit the Organizing Committee of the XVI OLYMPIAD to successfully carry out its work.”<sup>58</sup> They concluded by asking for IOC consent, stating, “we sincerely hope our Colleagues and Friends will support this initiative and vote in its favour when the time arrives to do so.”<sup>59</sup> Informing the full IOC membership about Perón’s patronage of the project was a wise diplomatic move – the timing was not coincidental. When Buenos Aires appeared as a registered candidate for the 1956 Olympics at the next IOC session held during the 1948 London Olympics, no one should have been surprised. That Buenos Aires received the right to host the first Pan-American Games during the Second Pan-American Congress also held while athletes competed in London was not surprising either.<sup>60</sup> The bidding campaign was in full swing.

While Buenos Aires established itself as a serious international candidate for the 1956 Olympics, Perón continued to build support for his sport policy at home, a strategy intimately connected to his political project. When the Argentine delegation to the 1948 Olympics returned home, a rally was held at the Club Atlético River Plate’s stadium. In his address, Perón linked the athletic work and triumphs of the nation’s athletes to the recreation of Argentina by proclaiming:

*Let this be our tribute to the glories of sports, to the champions, to all the athletes who are constructing the New Argentina we yearned for, an Argentina of healthy men, sturdy men, and strong men; because only healthy, tough peoples make great nations.*<sup>61</sup>

Against a background of unparalleled governmental sustenance of sport, the success of their athletes in the 1948 Olympics, and the plans for the first Pan-American Games scheduled for 1951 underway, the Argentines moved ahead quickly with Buenos Aires’ bid to host the 1956 Olympics. Despite the national sport effervescence, Aldao, vigilant of Olympic principles, cautioned Edström in late 1948 that some of his government’s deeds in sport were on the verge of transgressing those principles. Certainly, Perón and his allies established “a centralized supervisory system overseeing all sports,” including the appointment of political cronies in sport federations and organizations.<sup>62</sup> However, Aldao’s cautionary communication did not mention any irregularities with Buenos Aires’ bid.<sup>63</sup> In March of 1949, Rodolfo G. Valenzuela, a close associate of Perón’s who was the new president of the *Comité Olímpico Argentino*, and Rossi wrote to the IOC repeating their wish to organize the 1956 Olympics. The long letter replicated the merits of the candidacy, insisting that Buenos Aires “has all the characteristics of the great capitals of the world” and that it “is considered one of the better built capitals of America.”<sup>64</sup> The Argentines also produced for the IOC a lavish book about Argentina that worked as a sort of “formal invitation to celebrate the Olympic Games of 1956 in this city [Buenos Aires].”<sup>65</sup> In the book, Perón and the city’s mayor expressed their support for the bid. Buenos Aires officially sent the IOC a good



*General Santos V. Rossi (first from the right), president of the Consejo Nacional de Educación Física and an important figure in the bid for the 1956 Olympic Games, attends the lighting of the votive lamp ceremony for the Week of the Youth with other officials on September 27, 1948 in Tucumán.*

deal of additional information about Argentine sports.<sup>66</sup> The IOC acknowledged receipt of all material and confirmed the dates of the decisive next IOC session that would take place in Rome.<sup>67</sup>

On April 28, 1949, officials representing the cities bidding for the 1956 Olympics appeared before the IOC. They made final attempts to convince IOC members that their city was the best suited to host the Games. Argentina was represented by Rafael Ocampo Giménez, Argentine ambassador to Italy, Mario L. Negri, future IOC member, Aldao, and Bustos Morón. The latter lobbied his colleagues to gain their support. Buenos Aires' campaign achieved some success in Latin America. For instance, days before the election, the Uruguayan Olympic Committee cabled the IOC that it supported Buenos Aires.<sup>68</sup> But the support was not unanimous; the Brazilian IOC members cabled their votes for Detroit.<sup>69</sup> In spite of the delegation's effort, Buenos Aires' bid fell one vote short. Melbourne beat Buenos Aires in the fourth round by a vote of 21-20, garnering the right to organize the 1956 Olympics. The *Comité Olímpico Argentino* turned the close defeat into a victory.<sup>70</sup> The one vote difference "comforts the spirit and satisfies the highest Argentine desires, for all what it means for our Nation and Argentine sports."<sup>71</sup> Besides the alleged comfort, the defeat did not discourage a new bid. After all, if Perón demanded so much perseverance from his athletes to build the "New Argentina," he could not desist bidding for the Games at the first hindrance he faced. Immediately after Melbourne was awarded the 1956 Olympics, the *Comité* and the *Consejo Nacional de Educación Física* agreed to bid for

the 1960 Olympics.<sup>72</sup> Bustos Morón promptly expressed his hope that Buenos Aires would host the Games in the near future.<sup>73</sup>

To show the renewed Argentine commitment to the Olympic Movement, Rossi offered to organize the 1950 IOC session in Buenos Aires. Since that session was already scheduled for Copenhagen, Buenos Aires was considered for the following meeting. In Copenhagen, Buenos Aires appeared on lists as both a candidate for the 1960 Olympics and for the May 1951 IOC session.<sup>74</sup> Buenos Aires was turned down for the latter; the IOC chose Vienna. A May 1951 IOC session in Buenos Aires would have been great timing and publicity to boost the 1960 Olympic project. The first Pan-American Games held in Buenos Aires from February 25 to March 8 was not only well-organized but also designated as a tremendous success of the Peronist regime. Argentine athletes dominated the medal count. An exultant Perón declared that the accomplishment was “a new victory that the peronist movement deposits in the altar of the Nation.”<sup>75</sup> Shortly after the Games, a confident Bustos Morón told Edstrøm that if the 1956 Olympics could not be held in Melbourne, Buenos Aires would be willing to take over.<sup>76</sup> The regime’s sport successes and Perón’s dream of Olympic glory in Buenos Aires, as well as his political edifice, did not last long. In September 1955, the *Revolución Libertadora* (Liberating Revolution) ousted Perón from the presidency. His enemies “sought to eradicate every vestige of Peronism from national life, and one of its first moves was to ‘de-Peronize’ sports.”<sup>77</sup> Little wonder that bringing the Olympics to Buenos Aires was not one of the revolution’s priorities.

### The Bid for the 1968 Olympic Games

The *Revolución Libertadora*’s crusade against all things Peronist had an immediate impact on the Argentine Olympic Movement. Not only was a Buenos Aires Olympics not prominent on the new authorities’ agenda, but also their actions severely jeopardized the prospect of sending a national delegation to the 1956 Olympics. The provisional government named General Fernando I. Huergo as supervisor of the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* in order to oversee and reorganize it. This situation disturbed Avery Brundage, a rabid apostle of amateurism and the Olympic doctrine of strict separation between sport and politics—something Perón certainly did not practice—who had become IOC president in 1952. In April 1956, Brundage warned Argentine officials, “As the matter stands it seems that no team from the Argentine can be entered in the Melbourne Games.”<sup>78</sup> What the IOC wanted was “sport to be ruled by sportsmen and not politicians,” as specified in the Olympic rules.<sup>79</sup> Internationally pressured, the government decreed in August the conclusion of Huergo’s supervision of the *Comité* with elections for new officials taking place the following month. Predictably, when Huergo was elected president of the reorganized *Comité*, Peronist sport advocates were nowhere in sight. Given the election

of the *Comité's* new administration, the IOC considered the matter resolved, which allowed Argentine athletes to compete in Melbourne.<sup>80</sup> However, Argentine Olympic participation did not entice the *Revolución Libertadora* to revive the project to host the Olympic Games in Buenos Aires.



*Ricardo C. Aldao (center) visits General Fernando I. Huergo (second from the left), intervenor (1955-1956) and president of the Comité Olímpico Argentino (1956-1957), on November 4, 1955.*

The prospect of an Olympic Buenos Aires was heard once more only when the *Revolución Libertadora* withdrew from power. In 1958 the revolution allowed elections but the ban on Peronism was not lifted. Arturo Frondizi's ticket, secretly endorsed by Perón from his exile, emerged as the winner. Midway into Frondizi's term, José Oriani, then presiding over the *Comité Olímpico Argentino*, expressed to the IOC its "hopes as regards the site of the Olympic Games of 1968."<sup>81</sup> These hopes endured and survived a convoluted period of Argentine politics in a way that no politician of the time could. In 1962 Frondizi, defying the Army, lifted the ban on Peronism. Frondizi-backed candidates swept the March gubernatorial elections. When Frondizi refused to annul the elections, the Army deposed him. José María Guido, president of the Senate, replaced Frondizi. Guido's was a puppet regime controlled by the military, which preferred the pretense of legality to openly seize power.<sup>82</sup>

Soon afterwards, a plan to continue with the Buenos Aires 1968 bid was announced. In June of 1962, barely two months after Guido took the oath of office, Hernán Giralt, mayor of Buenos Aires, sent the IOC an "official application ... requesting that our City be awarded the honour of staging the Olympic Games to be held in 1968."<sup>83</sup> Days later, Oriani, made it explicit that the "application is endorsed and supported by the Argentine Olympic Committee ... as well as by those of millions of sportsmen of our country." Oriani framed the bid in historical terms. He argued:

*... that in several opportunities we made every possible effort in order to be entrusted the holding of the greatest of all sport events. You*

*remember that in the course of the 43rd. Session of the I.O.C., held in Rome in 1949, Buenos Aires lost by one vote the right to be chosen, and from that moment on we have not abandoned our intention of staging the Games, not only because we consider it a legitimate purpose but also because we are sure that we shall be able to organize them maintaining and even endeavouring to surpass the brightness and splendor they have always had.*<sup>84</sup>

The argument that the Olympic Games had never been held in South America was also mentioned.<sup>85</sup> To strengthen Buenos Aires' bid, in August 1962 the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* produced a publication recounting Argentine Olympic history and describing the amenities that Buenos Aires had to offer. Argentine Olympic hopefuls clarified that the government supported their negotiations.<sup>86</sup> The book highlighted support of the bid by Olympic notable Carl Diem, described as "the spiritual successor of Baron de Coubertin," who after a visit to the city declared, "It seems to us that the moment has come for the Argentine to offer the world an Olympic festival."<sup>87</sup>

In spite of local and international encouragement, misgivings regarding the Buenos Aires' bid ran high both in Argentina – even within the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* – and abroad. Jorge N. Parsons, a *Comité's* vice-president, expressed his qualms to the IOC chancellor stating, "we are having so many difficulties here that one hesitates to decide." Bearing in mind that Parsons thought that Buenos Aires was so well equipped that only the Olympic village would have to be constructed, his worries had to be political. Adding to domestic second-guessing was the IOC's position on the bid. IOC Chancellor Otto Mayer had warned Parsons that Brundage opposed the bid of Buenos Aires.<sup>88</sup> Nevertheless, local Olympic officials continued with Buenos Aires' bid.

Starting with the 1960 Olympics, the IOC required that all candidate cities answer a questionnaire addressing their technical and logistical capabilities to host the event.<sup>89</sup> In February 1963 the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* returned its questionnaire to the IOC. Alberto Prebisch, who had been appointed mayor of Buenos Aires, fully supported the bid.<sup>90</sup> While the bid process continued, internal dissent in the military allowed for another attempt at democracy. Elections were scheduled for July 1963. Arturo U. Illia was victorious; Peronism remained banned. The following month President-elect Illia assured Oriani that if the IOC chose Buenos Aires for 1968, "I can promise the most extensive support of the people and government, definitively united, in their efforts to coat the Olympic Games with a splendour according to its precedents."<sup>91</sup> With Illia's endorsement, Oriani and Prebisch launched a last effort to convince IOC members to give the Games to Buenos Aires. Oriani affirmed that "Our country... following democratic principles pointed by our National Constitution, is ready to carry on its progress till the final recovery."<sup>92</sup> He correctly predicted the apprehension that the Argentine recent political history might have caused in the IOC.

The IOC session that selected the city for the 1968 Olympics met late in October 1963 in Baden-Baden; Illia had already been sworn into office. Illia's and Oriani's promises of national unity were totally unconvincing. Equally unpersuasive were the three Argentine delegates that delivered a presentation on behalf of the nation's capital. It appeared that for the IOC members Buenos Aires' bid did not even exist. In a landslide, Mexico City was granted the right to host the 1968 Olympics, while Buenos Aires received a meager two votes, one presumably from the lone Argentine IOC member.<sup>93</sup> The result was a disaster when compared to the city's bid for the 1956 Olympics. That Buenos Aires' bid survived such domestic political turmoil could be seen as a sign that Argentine politicians – Peronist or not – understood the uses to which sport and the Olympic Games could be subjected. However, that survival, as impressive as it was, did not pass muster with the IOC. Ultimately, the IOC's disregard for Buenos Aires was not unwise. In June of 1966, President Illia's fate was sealed by another coup. Although the nation hosted the football (soccer) FIFA World Cup in 1978, the dream of a Buenos Aires Olympics entered a long interregnum.

### **The Bid for the 2004 Olympic Games**

The project of a Buenos Aires Olympics was dusted off in the 1990s by a Peronist-flavored government. During his presidential campaign, Carlos S. Menem promised a litany of traditional Peronist populist policies. However, soon after assuming the presidency in 1989, Menem replaced his party's conventional economic platform with a neoliberal, market-oriented program focused on the liberalization, deregulation, and privatization of the economy. The dramatic shift in economic policy produced a strong macroeconomic performance between 1991 and 1997. Argentina's successful story of reform became the darling of the economic international establishment. With domestic and international credibility on the rise, in 1994 Menem pushed a constitutional reform that would allow him to seek re-election. The manipulation of institutions to his advantage was typical of Menem's style of government, which did not help consolidate the fragile democratic system.<sup>94</sup> Beyond merits and shortcomings, it was precisely during this period of radical reforms that Menem's government articulated its bid for the 2004 Olympics. Although the election of the host city was scheduled for September 1997, Menem's reelection for the 1995-1999 period allowed him to witness his Olympic campaign from start to finish.

According to politicians in his party, the idea of bidding for the 2004 Olympics originated with Menem himself.<sup>95</sup> In regards to sport, Menem followed a traditionally-oriented Peronist policy. Even his critics acknowledged that Menem's sport policy was the only area in which he proved to be a legitimate Peronist.<sup>96</sup> The government support for sport was made evident in the funds poured



into the organization of the 1995 Pan-American Games held in the Argentinian coastal city of Mar del Plata. By the time of this event, it was quite clear in the Olympic Movement that Buenos Aires intended to bid for the 2004 Olympics. In mid-1994 Menem signed an executive decree creating the bid committee, led by Francisco A. Mayorga, state secretary of tourism and sports. The committee had a U.S. \$6 million budget.<sup>97</sup> Due to concerns about the expenditures of cities bidding for the Olympic Games, the work involved in the process, and the large number of cities interested in the 2004 Olympics, the IOC decided to implement a two-tiered selection process. In the first phase, an IOC evaluation commission would scrutinize the eleven cities' bids and prepare a report. Based on the evaluation commission's report, a selection college would choose five finalists on March 7, 1997. The second phase, which allowed IOC members to visit the five finalists, would involve the election of the host city during the IOC session held in Lausanne on September 5, 1997. Knowing the election process, Mayorga's committee set out a comprehensive bidding plan.<sup>98</sup>

The Buenos Aires 2004 bid committee produced an impressive dossier. The three-volume tome started by describing a long and distinguished Argentine Olympic history, the close defeat of the bid for the 1956 Olympics, the grandeur of Buenos Aires, and the city's love of sport, all of which gave the committee the "hope, strength and determination to struggle for the honor of hosting the Olympic Games in SOUTH AMERICA FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY."<sup>99</sup> The historical arguments used by previous city's bids had not been forgotten. However, knowing that history and claims of justice are relevant but hardly enough to gain the endorsement of the IOC, the Buenos Aires 2004 bid committee composed a comprehensive technical blueprint for the Games. The centerpiece was an "Olympic corridor," a combination of three major avenues along which there were existing and projected sport facilities. These facilities would have permitted the staging of 24 of the 28 sports planned in a tight geographical area. The "Olympic corridor," which included the Olympic stadium, village, and media center, promised convenient access and transportation to and between competition venues. According to the dossier, 75 percent of the venues were already in place, and the impact of the whole project on the city's environment would be minimal. The improvement of urban infrastructure and the legacy of the Games were as much emphasized as the cultural programs projected.<sup>100</sup>

While the bid was amply supported in Argentina, Mayorga and his team traveled the world to make its details known to the Olympic family. Late in 1996, the IOC evaluation commission visited Buenos Aires and in February 1997 sent all eleven bidding cities individualized technical reports. In the case of Buenos Aires, the evaluation commission lauded the "Olympic corridor," among other features of the blueprint. Although there were some criticisms, the report was altogether positive. Mayorga informed Menem at once. The

leader of the bid committee was confident that Buenos Aires would pass the selection college cut on March 7, 1997 to become one of the five finalists.<sup>101</sup> He was right. A month later IOC member Marc Hodler announced in Lausanne that Buenos Aires had made the cut, becoming the only South American city left in the race for the 2004 Olympics. Menem was ecstatic. From then on the key to the success of the bid was to convince IOC members that Buenos Aires was the best city for the Games. More than seventy IOC members accepted the invitation to visit Buenos Aires, most of whom were allegedly impressed with the city's project.<sup>102</sup> However, according to the media, some IOC members were wary of the local organizational aptitude as well as of the honesty of some Argentine officials.<sup>103</sup>

The days before the early September 1997 election, Buenos Aires' bid was a major topic of discussion in Argentine society. In the meantime, bid officials, as well as politicians, including Menem, sport administrators, civic leaders, and businesspeople traveled to Lausanne for the election. The bid committee made a carefully-prepared final presentation. Everybody knew that it was a long shot for Buenos Aires, but given the praise received by the bid, there were reasonably high expectations that the city would at least make a very good showing. Some might have believed that a huge surprise was possible. Hugo Porta, then state secretary of sports, declared: "I had the hope to win in Lausanne, although I knew that we were not the candidates."<sup>104</sup> The hopes proved to be groundless. Buenos Aires tied with Cape Town in the first round with the fewest votes – 16. In the run-off that determined which of the two cities would be eliminated, Cape Town won 62-44. It was a bitter pill for Argentine officials to accept that Buenos Aires did not pass the first round. After the election many in Argentina suggested possible reasons for the defeat: absence of Argentine sport administrators at the international level, weak sport and urban infrastructure, infrequent organization of premier international sport events, poor athletic performances in previous Olympic Games, inadequate state support for athletes. As reasonable as they were, these observations did not address the viability of the Games in the face of the larger Argentine political and economic context. There is little reason to disbelieve that the IOC paid close attention to Argentina's conditions in the 1990s and, more broadly, to its persistent and widespread political and economic instability.

Although the 1983 democratic transition put an end to more than fifty years of military intervention in Argentine politics, the nation was still vulnerable and the subject of institutional crises. Indeed, Menem's inauguration took place six months earlier than scheduled because Raúl Alfonsín, his predecessor, resigned amidst a chaotic economic situation. Menem finished his second mandate in 1999 and transferred power to Fernando De la Rúa, but his economic policies lingered, generating an extraordinary degree of social exclusion and inequality. In 1998 the Argentine economy entered into a long recession. Added to De

la Rúa's own inabilities, this unpleasant legacy eventually led to a severe economic down-turn and political crisis. De la Rúa resigned on December 20, 2001. His vice-president, displeased with the administration's reaction to a corruption scandal, had resigned earlier. The interim president chosen by Congress resigned on December 31, 2001. The following day, Congress appointed another interim president, who called for elections in 2003.<sup>105</sup> On January 25, 2002, Jacques Rogge, president of the IOC, referring to the Argentine crisis, declared, "Look what happens today in that country and imagine what would have occurred had we finally granted them the Olympic Games." Rogge added that the IOC would award the Olympic Games to an emergent country only if it enjoys political, economic, and social stability, otherwise it "is a risk, as the current crisis in Argentina demonstrates."<sup>106</sup>

Given that so much rides for the Olympic Movement on celebrating successful Games, IOC member Richard W. Pound has contended, "it is easy to see that what is more important for the IOC is not necessarily to make the right choice for a particular city but to avoid making the wrong decision."<sup>107</sup> For Pound, a wrong decision is to "choose a city that proves to be incapable of organizing good Games."<sup>108</sup> In this case, the IOC did not make such a mistake. After the failed Buenos Aires bid for the 2004 Olympics, some Argentines expressed interest in renewing the Olympic dream. Those heard before the 2001 political and economic crisis rapidly dissipated; those heard afterwards are quietly starting to repeat the old aspirations. Their target seems to be 2016.<sup>109</sup>

### **Interpreting Buenos Aires' Efforts to Host the Olympic Games**

Argentine politicians, sport administrators, and Olympic officials have shown interest in hosting the Olympic Games in Buenos Aires at various times during the twentieth century. Expressions of interest intensified after the creation in 1923 of the *Comité Olímpico Argentino*. Although Argentine Olympic officials have evidently perceived the attempts to bring the Olympic Games to Buenos Aires as an important aspect of their role as promoters of the Olympic Movement in their nation, some of their claims about the status of several of these attempts are, as indicated in the introduction of this article, less evident. Some of the confusion regarding Buenos Aires' efforts might stem from the fact that during the first half century of the IOC, it was not always clear what amounted to an "official" bid. Before the 1950s, applying for the Olympic Games was "a much less standardized and detail oriented bidding and selection process" than what it would become.<sup>110</sup>

Even if the bidding and selection process was not developed and structured until the 1950s, it seems clear that early claims to host the Olympic Games in Buenos Aires were unsubstantiated. Both Senator Gonzalez's comments in 1909 and Aldao's in 1924 did not amount to more than amorphous

manifestations of desire that one day Buenos Aires would host the Olympic Games. Although their comments indicate enthusiasm for the Olympic Movement, they did not include any comprehensive plan. Aldao's promise of a *Champ des sports*, including a massive national stadium, to be built on the premises of his *Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima de Buenos Aires*, could hardly be considered a plan. Having presided over the Argentine Olympic delegation to the 1924 Paris Olympics, he must have realized that a *Champ des sports* was important but by no means the only requirement to host the Olympic Games. Perhaps his comments were meant to convey the Argentine commitment to the Olympic Movement following the creation of the *Comité Olímpico Argentino*. In spite of hypothetical governmental support, the *Champ des sports* never materialized.

The attempt to bring the Olympic Games to Buenos Aires in 1936 is more difficult to analyze and classify. Initial communications between local Olympic officials and the IOC indicate a somewhat stronger pledge to organize the event than Aldao's 1924 promises. After the IOC manifested skepticism about Buenos Aires' project, Aldao announced that whatever was needed for the Games would be finished before 1936, including the colossal stadium. Aldao even made vague promises related to assistance with travel and accommodation for visiting delegations. According to him, the government supported the effort of the *Comité Olímpico Argentino*. Aldao's reassurance made the IOC change its mind and Buenos Aires was listed as a candidate in 1930. However, the city was not considered in the 1931 election. Running afoul of IOC politics, Aldao and Alvear resigned from the organization in 1930. If the wrangle between them and the IOC leadership was not enough to destroy the chances of Buenos Aires, the September 1930 overthrow of President Yrigoyen's government killed the city's hopes. Resignations from the IOC combined with political turmoil was too much instability for the IOC. After Aldao's and Alvear's resignations, the bid was seen as imprudent, even within Argentina.

After the Argentine IOC members resigned from the IOC, there were no more strong indications that Buenos Aires was still interested in the Games. It is also likely that for the coup authorities bringing the Games to Buenos Aires was not important. For whatever reasons, the prospect of a 1936 Buenos Aires Olympics was abandoned both at home and abroad, which suggests that despite its initial strength, the project never reached any significant degree of maturity. Failure to reach the election stage for the 1936 Olympics did not discourage Argentine Olympic officials from wanting the 1940 Olympics, although comments were not accompanied with any plans. Aspirations quickly evaporated. Similarly, the idea to host the Games in Buenos Aires in 1960 was never developed. Those brief efforts, while showing commitment to an old hope and to the Olympic Movement, were merely informal expressions of interest.

The first attempt to host the Olympic Games in Buenos Aires that can be considered a full bid was the effort put forward for the 1956 Olympics. Fully embraced by Juan Perón's government, the bid was tied to the enormous importance that sport played in his political program and ambitions. In addition to arguing that Buenos Aires was a splendid city, that sport was wildly popular in Argentina, and that the Games had never been awarded to South America, Perón promised all kind of resources to host the event. Considering the ostentation displayed during the first Pan-American Games held in 1951 during his first presidency, it is likely that Perón would have fulfilled his promise. The bid rallied tremendous support in the IOC, eventually losing to Melbourne by one vote, one of closest bid elections ever. However, as pointed out, not all of South America was behind Buenos Aires' bid. Rio de Janeiro had also long aspired to be the first regional city to host the Games. It is not improbable that the contest for this "first" worked against the election of Buenos Aires. Opposition to Perón's autocratic regime also negatively influenced the outcome of the bid. Regardless of the reasons for the loss, the IOC must have been reassured with its decision when it learned that Perón had been ousted by a coup a year before the 1956 Olympics. The mere thought of the countless uncertainties that would have arisen had the Games been awarded to Buenos Aires must have been unsettling.

The second full bid was the attempt to host the 1968 Olympics in Buenos Aires. The *Comité Olímpico Argentino* repeated the arguments advanced in the race for the 1956 Olympics. The loss by one vote to Melbourne was constructed as a sign of unrequited Olympic commitment and used along with the claim saying that the Games had never been celebrated in South America as a sort of moral appeal. But the bid, which in the course of over two years endured and survived one coup and two democratically-elected presidents, generated anxieties in Argentina and abroad. There were doubts within the *Comité*, and IOC President Brundage was opposed to Buenos Aires for 1968. The problems were not technical but political. Facing domestic political instability and opposed by the IOC president himself, the bid did not have any future. At the time of the election, it received two solitary votes. In all probability, South American IOC members rallied behind the bid of Mexico City, which became the first so-called Latin American city to host the Games in a landslide vote. Their meager support for Buenos Aires 1968 gave IOC members a measure of smugness when President Illia was overthrown in 1966.

The last attempt to date to host the Olympic Games in Buenos Aires was the bid for the 2004 Olympics. It was the best bid Buenos Aires ever presented. The usual historic arguments claimed the Games on moral ground. In addition, the bid dossier included a comprehensive technical blueprint to host the Games, whose highlight was the praised "Olympic corridor." The bid gathered strong domestic support and international attention. Consistent with President Menem's

market-oriented reforms, the bid was seen as a catalyst to showcase the progress of Argentina in the 1990s. However, local officials failed to assess or incorporate in their bid analyses and predictions of the larger political and economic forces at play in Argentina. Encouraged by the economic boom, they could not, or did not want, to perceive those forces. This blindness reveals a poor understanding of IOC dynamics. The IOC, an institution with conservative lineage, did not fail to locate the bid in the larger domestic and international context. Although it praised the technical aspects of the bid, the IOC doubted the viability of what was promised. A fragile political system, whose central feature is instability and an irregularly performing economy, was not the ideal framework for the IOC. The elimination of Buenos Aires in the first round was not by any means what Argentine officials imagined. But the IOC was right. The crash of the economy and the political disaster of late 2001 confirmed the acumen of the IOC's customary position to elect host cities: prioritize stability, even if it means postponing the materialization of the universal values of the Games.

The protracted interest in hosting the Olympic Games in Buenos Aires sheds lights on the role and importance that Argentina has imagined for itself in the Olympic Movement. The expressions of interest and bids studied have usually been portrayed as a measure of continuity in the Argentine commitment to the Olympic Movement since its creation in 1894, as well as a sign of regional leadership in the diffusion of its ideals. Indeed, it has been a recurrent theme in the bids to maintain that Buenos Aires was carrying not only the aspirations of the Argentine people but also that of all South Americans. The hosting of the Games in Buenos Aires has also been predicted as an event that would take national and regional sport to new and unprecedented heights. Along with the rationale of strong historical leadership, Argentine Olympic hopefuls have insisted that the universalism inherent in the Olympic ideals merits bringing the Games to South America and that Buenos Aires is ideally suited for the challenge. This argument found even more vitality after Buenos Aires lost the 1956 Olympics to Melbourne by one vote. Locally, this close election and the fact that Buenos Aires was a finalist for the 2004 Olympics have been viewed as an indication of the distinctive position Argentina enjoys in the Olympic Movement.

In addition to the self-appointed leadership role in regional Olympic matters, Buenos Aires' attempts to host the Olympic Games reveal an intention to situate the city among the great capitals of the world. This, of course, was intimately connected with the portrayal of Argentina as a vibrant nation at the "New World" center of Western civilization. The bids' narratives told a story of Buenos Aires as a dynamic metropolis possessing the charm and the qualities essential to host the greatest of all sport events. This is consistent with the purposeful portrayal, domestically and internationally, by Argentine elites throughout the twentieth century of Buenos Aires as the Paris of South America.<sup>111</sup> In the minds of many *porteños* as well as foreigners, Buenos Aires has such a Parisian char-

acter, which arguably makes it so different from all other South American cities. Seen as a European enclave, a Buenos Aires Olympics felt much closer to the Eurocentric project started by Coubertin in the early 1890s. The quest to garner the Olympic Games for Buenos Aires has cemented Argentina's self-determined place in Latin America.

The continuities in the legitimation of narratives constructed by Buenos Aires' Olympic campaigns to project certain representations of the role, and the importance of Argentina in the Olympic Movement, as well as of Buenos Aires and Argentina in the Western world have been accompanied by some fractures that show the changing relationship among politics, sport, and Olympic matters in Argentina. The earlier designs to host the Games in Buenos Aires were articulated at a time in which "sporting activity in Argentina was largely a private effort by various sport associations, while the state was conspicuous by its absence or apathy."<sup>112</sup> That is why Aldao's *Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima de Buenos Aires*, along with the *Comité Olimpico Argentino*, was at the center of those efforts. The state was, of course, present, but its role was merely supportive. The actors carrying the work forward, albeit connected with the government, were in the private realm. This was quite visible in the preparations for the failed 1942 Pan-American Games. The structure changed with Perón. The state became conspicuously active in sport politics. In the bid for the 1956 Olympics, the government through its control of the sport and Olympic spheres became the main actor. After Perón, governments were never again apathetic about sport, but their involvement was not always so focused and centralized. Starting with the bid for the 1956 Olympics, the more the state apparatus controlled sport, the more the bids were tied to partisan political programs.

Even though failure has been the common denominator of the now nearly century-long aspiration to host the Olympic Games in Buenos Aires, there is much to learn from the continuities and fractures, that is the history, of these attempts. The legitimating narratives constructed around Buenos Aires' efforts constitute a fascinating entry to analyze the entangled connections of politics, sport, and the Olympic Movement in Argentina. In the attempt to construct an Olympic Buenos Aires, Argentines have, to use Benedict Anderson's terminology, told themselves stories about who they are and who they want to become.<sup>113</sup> After the relative stillness that followed the failed bid for the 2004 Olympics, the old Olympic hope is gradually being revived. The success of Argentine athletes in Athens, who won the nation's first gold medal in more than fifty years, as well as the recent economic recovery, might be the forces behind the move. Whether or not Buenos Aires bids in the near future, the debate itself is forcing the Argentine people to ponder once again who they are and who they want to become.

## A Brief Excursus into the Future

In May 2006 the Pan-American Sport Organization (PASO) held its general assembly in Buenos Aires. The occasion drew Olympic and sport leaders from the Western hemisphere and beyond. Indeed, Rogge made the long trip to Buenos Aires. As is customary for this kind of sport events, the gathering was also visited by a number of local politicians. The *Comité Olímpico Argentino's* set-up in the *Hotel Panamericano* was impeccable. Although the PASO general assembly was to discuss hemispheric sport affairs, for some the temptation to resuscitate the dream of Olympic Games in Buenos Aires was impossible to abandon. After all, it was a gathering of the hemispheric Olympic family and it was, in all places, in Buenos Aires. Opening the general assembly, Argentine Vice-President, Daniel Scioli, declared, "The city of Buenos Aires can be the host of the Olympic Games in 2016. From the current recovery of our country we have to work towards this objective that, without a doubt, we can achieve."<sup>114</sup> Scioli went on to say that the Games provide ample opportunity to develop industries such as sport and tourism. Rogge and Mario Vázquez Raña, president of PASO, were supportive of the idea. While the former thought that Buenos Aires had the necessary conditions to bid, the latter believed that it has the capacity to organize the Olympic Games.<sup>115</sup>

However, the renewed prospect of a Buenos Aires Olympics did not entice all local political and sport leaders. Without contradicting either Scioli or influential Olympic actors, Claudio Morresi, state secretary of sports, warned, "That is a dream of everyone, but we must be cautious."<sup>116</sup> Some journalists were more emphatic against a bid. Mariano Ryan, writing for the Buenos Aires daily *Clarín*, affirmed that in spite of the recent economic recovery, a country with the levels of unemployment, poverty, and insecurity of Argentina couldn't aspire to host the Games in the near future. He also mentioned that the South American Games, a rather humble operation compared to the Olympic Games, scheduled to take place in Buenos Aires in November 2006, was giving headaches to the city's organizers.<sup>117</sup> It is worth mentioning that late in 2001 Córdoba, a city in the center of Argentina, reneged from organizing the 2002 South American Games – an embarrassing act for a nation with Olympic aspirations.<sup>118</sup> The organization of the 2006 South American Games in Buenos Aires was locally portrayed as another measure of the country's recovery.

Critics of a future bid to host the Olympic Games in Buenos Aires rightly point out the social exclusion and inequality raging in Argentina. This does not deny the stabilization and growth of the economy in the last four years but indicates the necessity to debate whether the nation should even consider bidding for the Games in such a social environment. What the critics only imply tangentially, since the economic and social spheres are always intimately interwoven with it, is the political viability to bring the Games to Buenos Ai-



res. Given Argentina's long history of institutional instability and lack of credibility, this seems to be the crucial point. Things might be changing on this front too. Political scientists Steven Levitsky and María Victoria Murillo believe that "If institutional instability remains a central feature of contemporary Argentine politics, however, the scope of that instability may be narrowing." The democratic institutions established in the 1980s and the market-oriented institutions created in the 1990s have survived several political and economic crises. The prospect of renewed military intervention seems to have faded. For Levitsky and Murillo,

*[t]his core institutional stability constitutes a significant break with earlier patterns, and it permits a measure of optimism about Argentina's political future, even as the country struggles to recover from the devastating crises of the not-too-distant past.<sup>119</sup>*

Political and economic institutions take a long time and a great deal of effort to solidify. Until that mild optimism materializes in stable, credible, and predictable institutions, the dream of a Buenos Aires Olympics remains fragile. In the meantime, Argentina should attend to its pressing social needs and demands so that everyone in the nation can have Olympic dreams. However, if Buenos Aires articulates a bid in the near future, one has to pay close attention; for, as Pound has observed, the IOC's results in terms of selecting host cities "are often astonishing, and have been known to defy subsequent analysis."<sup>120</sup> With the IOC one never knows for sure.

## Endnotes

- 1 Natives of Buenos Aires are known as *porteños* in Spanish.
- 2 *Buenos Aires 2004* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 1997), 1: 10.
- 3 See, for example, *La Nación* (Buenos Aires) (hereafter *La Nación*), June 9, 1997, Suplemento Especial.
- 4 "Argentina and Olympism," *Olympic Review* 87-88, (January-February 1975), 28.
- 5 Simón Silvestrini has argued this point in an unpublished manuscript entitled "Juegos Olímpicos de 1896 al 2008. Estadísticas. Candidaturas y sedes. Ciudades, países, continentes." In his account, Silvestrini included the attempt to host the 1956 equestrian competitions that could not be organized in Melbourne.
- 6 Some of their claims regarding Zubiatur's relation to the Olympic Movement were historically dubious. See Cesar R. Torres, "Mass Sport Through Education or Elite Olympic Sport? José Benjamín Zubiatur's Dilemma and

- Argentina's Olympic Sports Legacy," *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* 7 (1998), 61-88.
- 7 See *ibid.* and Cesar R. Torres "Tribulations and Achievements: The Early History of Olympism in Argentina," *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 18, no. 3 (2001), 59-92.
  - 8 See Cesar R. Torres, "Ideas encontradas: la educación física y el deporte en el debate parlamentario sobre la participación argentina en los Juegos Olímpicos de 1908," *Olympika: The International Journal of Olympic Studies* 11 (2002), 117-142.
  - 9 Joaquín V. Gonzalez, *Obras Completas* (Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de La Plata, 1935), 9 and 344.
  - 10 *Ibid.*
  - 11 See *Memoria de la comisión del centenario al poder ejecutivo nacional* (Buenos Aires: Coni, 1910); *Guía-programa de los festejos del centenario, 1810-1910* (Buenos Aires: Talleres Heliográficos de Ortega y Radaelli, 1910); and *Comisión auxiliar de Juegos Olímpicos del centenario. Programa del concurso atlético internacional. Mayo 1910. Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Establecimiento Tipográfico J. Carbone, 1910).
  - 12 Yves-Pierre Boulongne, "The Presidency of Pierre de Coubertin (1896-1925)," in *1894-1994. The International Olympic Committee—One Hundred Years. The Idea, The Presidents, The Achievement*, 3 vols., supervised by Raymond Gafner (Lausanne: International Olympic Committee, 1995), 1:105. See also Otto Mayer, *A Travers les Anneaux Olympiques* (Geneva: Pierre Cailler, 1960), 61.
  - 13 For an account of this period's struggles, see Cesar R. Torres, "Tribulations and Achievements: The Early History of Olympism in Argentina;" *idem*, "If We Had Had Our Argentine Team Here! Football and the 1924 Argentine Olympic Team," *Journal of Sport History* 30, no. 1 (2003), 1-24; *idem*, "A Time of Conflict: Argentine Sports and the 1924 Olympic Team," in *The Global Nexus Engaged: Past, Present, Future Interdisciplinary Olympic Studies*, eds. Kevin B. Wamsley, Robert K. Barney and Scott G. Martyn, (London, Ontario: International Center for Olympic Studies, 2002), 161-170.
  - 14 Ricardo C. Aldao, *Rapport sur les sports en Argentine* (Paris: Imprimerie Dubois & Bauer, 1924), 6.
  - 15 *Ibid.*, 6-8.
  - 16 *Ibid.*, 8.
  - 17 *La Nación*, July 15, 1924.
  - 18 See Rafael Cullen to Henri de Baillet-Latour, 11 August 1923; and Ricardo C. Aldao to Henri de Baillet-Latour, 5 September 1923, *Jeux Régionaux. Correspondance, conférences et documents. 1924-1928* (hereafter *Jeux Régionaux. 1924-1928*), *Le Comité International Olympique Archives* (hereafter *IOC Archives*), Lausanne, Switzerland.

- 19 *La Nación*, July 4, 1924.
- 20 See Procès-Verbaux du 26ème. Session du Comité International Olympique, 1925 Prague, IOC Archives; and Wolf Lyberg, *The IOC Sessions. 1894-1955* (Lausanne: International Olympic Committee, 1989), 126.
- 21 See Procès-Verbaux du 24ème. Session du Comité International Olympique, 1927 Monaco, IOC Archives; and Lyberg, *The IOC Sessions. 1894-1955*, 138.
- 22 Ricardo C. Aldao to Henri de Baillet-Latour, 30 June 1928, JO Ete 1936. Correspondance Generale. 1924-1931 (hereafter JO Ete 1936), IOC Archives.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Anon. to Ricardo C. Aldao, 10 August 1928, JO Ete 1936, IOC Archives.
- 25 Ricardo C. Aldao to IOC Secretary, 30 January 1929, 28E Session Lausanne 1929. Correspondance. 1929-1929, IOC Archives.
- 26 Ricardo C. Aldao to Henri de Baillet-Latour, 3 April 1929, JO Ete 1936, IOC Archives. In 1927 Alvear dissolved the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* and conferred to the *Confederación Argentina de Deportes* (Argentine Confederation of Sports) the attributes of the former. Because this organization functioned as the National Olympic Committee, it was referred to as *Confederación Argentina de Deportes-Comité Olimpico Argentino* (CADCOA) until 1956, at which point the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* and the *Confederación Argentina de Deportes* once again became separate entities. Despite the period in which the CADCOA functioned as the Olympic authority in Argentina, for simplicity's sake and to avoid confusion, I will use *Comité Olímpico Argentino* throughout the text.
- 27 Yrigoyen had also preceded Alvear in the presidency. For an account of Yrigoyen's and Alvear's terms see David Rock, *Argentina, 1516-1987. From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 199-213; and Luis Alberto Romero, *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, trans. James P. Brennan (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 27-58.
- 28 See Procès-Verbaux du 29ème. Session du Comité International Olympique, 1930 Berlin, IOC Archives; and Lyberg, *The IOC Sessions. 1894-1955*, 159.
- 29 Ricardo C. Aldao to Henri de Baillet-Latour, 31 May 1930, Baillet-Latour, Henri de. Correspondance. 1925-1930 (hereafter Baillet-Latour. 1925-1930), IOC Archives. See also *La Prensa* (Buenos Aires) (hereafter *La Prensa*), May 29, 1930.
- 30 Marcelo T. de Alvear to Henri de Baillet-Latour, 6 June 1930; Henri de Baillet-Latour to Ricardo C. Aldao, 12 June 1930; Henri de Baillet-Latour to Marcelo T. de Alvear, 14 June 1930; Marcelo T. de Alvear to Henri de Baillet-Latour, 18 June 1930; and Ricardo C. Aldao to Henri de Baillet-Latour, 1 July 1930, Baillet-Latour. 1925-1930, IOC Archives. See also *La Prensa*, May 29, 1930.

- 31 See Procès-Verbaux du 30ème. Session du Comité International Olympique, 1930 Barcelona, IOC Archives; and Lyberg, *The IOC Sessions. 1894-1955*, 159 and 164.
- 32 Miguel de Beistegui to A. G. Berdez, 30 April 1931, J● Ete 1936, IOC Archives.
- 33 Henri de Baillet-Latour to Ricardo C. Aldao and Marcelo T. de Alvear, ca. April 1931, JO Ete 1936, IOC Archives.
- 34 Ricardo C. Aldao to Henri de Baillet-Latour, 24 July 1931; Henri de Baillet-Latour to Members of the Executive Board, 12 October 1931; and Henri de Baillet-Latour to Marcelo T. de Alvear, 12 June 1932, Baillet-Latour, Henri de. Correspondance. 1931-1938 (hereafter Baillet-Latour. 1931-1938), IOC Archives. See also Confederación Argentina de Deportes-Comité Olímpico Argentino, *Memoria y balance. Periodo: 1 de noviembre de 1930 al 31 de octubre de 1931* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 1931), 14-15.
- 35 See Confederación Argentina de Deportes-Comité Olímpico Argentino, *Memoria y balance. Periodo: 1 de noviembre de 1930 al 31 de octubre de 1931* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 1931), 14-15; Ricardo C. Aldao to Henri de Baillet-Latour, 4 November 1931, Baillet-Latour. 1931-1938; and Ricardo C. Aldao to International Olympic Committee, 27 October 1931, Aldao, Ricardo. Correspondance. 1927-1958 (hereafter Aldao), IOC Archives.
- 36 For details of the coup's impact on Argentine life see Rock, *Argentina, 1516-1987*, 214-261; Romero, *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, 59-90; and Alberto Ciria, *Parties and Power in Modern Argentina, 1930-1946* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974).
- 37 Jorge Alemandri, *Cincuentenario del Club de Gimnasia y Esgrima, 1880-1930* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 1931), 186.
- 38 *Bulletin Officiel du Comité International Olympique*, 18 (July 1931), 15. See also Confederación Argentina de Deportes-Comité Olímpico Argentino, *Memoria y balance. Periodo: 1 de noviembre de 1930 al 31 de octubre de 1931*, 50-51.
- 39 See Procès-Verbaux du 31ème. Session du Comité International Olympique, 1932 Los Angeles, IOC Archives; and Lyberg, *The IOC Sessions. 1894-1955*, 168.
- 40 See Procès-Verbaux du 34ème. Session du Comité International Olympique, 1935 Oslo, IOC Archives; and Lyberg, *The IOC Sessions. 1894-1955*, 185.
- 41 Horacio Bustos Morón to Henri de Baillet-Latour, 15 March 1935, 36E Session Berlin 1936. Resultats Vote. 1936-1936 (hereafter 36E Session Berlin 1936), IOC Archives.
- 42 Horacio Bustos Morón to Henri de Baillet-Latour, 27 June 1936, 36E Session Berlin 1936, IOC Archives.
- 43 Juan Carlos Palacios to F. W. Rubien, 27 September 1939, Record Series 26/20/37, Box 202 (hereafter Box 202), Avery Brundage Collection, 1908-1982 (hereafter Avery Brundage Collection), University of Illinois Archives.

- 44 See, for example, *ibid.*; and Juan Carlos Palacios and Oscar J. Camilión to Henri de Baillet-Latour, 5 December 1939, Argentine. Correspondance. 1907-1965 (hereafter Argentine), IOC Archives.
- 45 Juan Carlos Palacios to Avery Brundage, 12 January 1940; and Juan Carlos Palacios to Avery Brundage, 15 July 1940, Box 202, Avery Brundage Collection.
- 46 See First Panamerican Congress, ca. August 1940; and Panamerican Sports Committee, ca. August 1940, Box 202, Avery Brundage Collection. This committee was the precursor to what is now the Pan-American Sports Organization (PASO). See also Confederación Argentina de Deportes-Comité Olímpico Argentino, *Memoria y balance general-inventario. Periodo: 1 de octubre de 1939 al 30 de septiembre de 1940* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 1940), 15-29.
- 47 See also Confederación Argentina de Deportes-Comité Olímpico Argentino, *Memoria y balance general-inventario. Periodo: 1 de octubre de 1940 al 30 de septiembre de 1941* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 1941), 17-36.
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- 49 *Ibid.*
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- 51 Rock, *Argentina, 1516-1987*, 262.
- 52 Raanan Rein, “‘El Primer Deportista:’ The Political Use and Abuse of Sport in Peronist Argentina,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 15, no. 2 (1998), 55. Analyses of Perón’s approach to sport can be found in Ariel Scher, *La patria deportista* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1996), 151-201; and Pablo Alabarces, *Fútbol y patria. El fútbol y las narrativas de la nación en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Prometeo, 2002), 65-82. For accounts of Perón’s government see Rock, *Argentina, 1516-1987*, 262-319; Romero, *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, 91-130; and Alejandro Horowicz, *Los cuatro peronismos* (Buenos Aires: Hyspamérica, 1986).
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- 54 Horacio Bustos Morón to International Olympic Committee, 28 January 1948, JO Ete 1956, IOC Archives.
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- 58 Ricardo C. Aldao and Horacio Bustos Morón to Sigfrid Edstrøm, 28 June 1948, JO Ete 1956, IOC Archives.
- 59 Ricardo C. Aldao and Horacio Bustos Morón to Colleagues and Friends of the International Olympic Committee, 28 June 1948, JO Ete 1956, IOC Archives.
- 60 Confederación Argentina de Deportes-Comité Olimpico Argentino, *Memoria y balance general-inventario. Ejercicio: 1 de octubre de 1947 al 30 de septiembre de 1948*, 22-28.
- 61 Quoted in Rein, “‘El Primer Deportista’: The Political Use and Abuse of Sport in Peronist Argentina,” 69.
- 62 Ibid., 56. In 1951 the *Comité Olímpico Argentino* modified its bylaws establishing that the government would appoint the *Comité’s* President.
- 63 Ricardo C. Aldao to Sigfrid Edstrøm, 20 December 1948, Aldao, IOC Archives.
- 64 Rodolfo G. Valenzuela and Santos Vicente Rossi to the International Olympic Committee, 5 March 1949, JO Ete 1956, IOC Archives.
- 65 *Ciudad de Buenos Aires. República Argentina* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 1956), n.p.
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- 67 Otto Mayer to Comité Olímpico Argentino, 16 March 1949, Argentine, IOC Archives.
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- 69 Arnaldo Guinle to Sigfrid Edstrøm, 21 April 1949; Antônio Prado Jr. to Sigfrid Edstrøm, 23 April 1949; and José Ferreira Santos to Sigfrid Edstrøm, 27 April 1949, JO Ete 1956, IOC Archives.
- 70 Confederación Argentina de Deportes-Comité Olimpico Argentino, *Memoria. Balance general y cuenta de gastos y recursos. XXVIII ejercicio. 1 de octubre de 1948 al 30 de septiembre de 1949*, 22-24.
- 71 Ibid., 24.
- 72 Ibid.
- 73 Horacio Bustos Morón to Otto Mayer, 25 November 1949, JO Ete 1956, IOC Archives.

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- 75 *Mensaje del Presidente de la Nación Argentina General Juan Perón al Inaugurar el 85° Periodo Ordinario de Sesiones del Honorable Congreso Nacional. Conceptos Doctrinarios* (Buenos Aires: Presidencia de la Nación, 1951), 178.
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- 77 Rein, “‘El Primer Deportista’: The Political Use and Abuse of Sport in Peronist Argentina,” 54. See Rock, *Argentina, 1516-1987*, 333-346; and Romero, *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, 131-171 for studies of the 1955-1966 period.
- 78 Avery Brundage to Enrique Alberdi, 28 April 1956, Argentine, IOC Archives.
- 79 Otto Mayer to Enrique Alberdi, 21 August 1956, Argentine, IOC Archives.
- 80 The government did not support some athletes who swore allegiance to Perón. For details of the government’s action see the copious correspondence written by the IOC president, the IOC chancellor, the Argentine IOC members, and several Argentine Olympic officials in this regard in Argentine, IOC Archives.
- 81 José Oriani and Alberto P. Petrolini to Otto Mayer, 12 December 1961, Argentine, IOC Archives. Apparently, Argentine IOC member Enrique C. Alberdi asked IOC authorization to apply for the 1968 Olympics in 1959. See *Buenos Aires aspira a los Juegos Olímpicos de 1968* (Buenos Aires: n.p., ca. August 1962), 53.
- 82 See Rock, *Argentina, 1516-1987*, 333-343.
- 83 José Oriani and Alberto P. Petrolini to Avery Brundage, 15 June 1962, JO Ete 1968. Correspondance Generale. 1957-1964, (hereafter JO Ete 1968), IOC Archives. See also Hernán Giralt to Avery Brundage, 12 June 1962, JO Ete 1968, IOC Archives.
- 84 José Oriani and Alberto P. Petrolini to Avery Brundage, 15 June 1962, JO Ete 1968, IOC Archives.
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 *Buenos Aires aspira a los Juegos Olímpicos de 1968*, 54.
- 87 Ibid., 55.
- 88 Jorge N. Parsons to Otto Mayer, 17 August 1962, Argentine, IOC Archives.
- 89 Martha J. McIntosh, “The Olympic Host City Bid Process: Facing Challenges and Making Changes,” in *Blickpunkt Olympia: Entdeckungen, Erkenntnisse, Impulse. Focus on Olympism: Discoveries, Discussion, Directions*, eds.

- Manfred Messing and Norbert Müller (Agon Sportverlag and Walla Walla Press: Kassel and Sydney, 2000), 313.
- 90 See Alberto Prebisch to Avery Brundage, 11 February 1963; José Oriani and Alberto P. Petrolini to Avery Brundage, 15 February 1963; and *Replies to the Questionnaire to be Answered in Presenting Buenos Aires as Site for the XIX Olympic Games 1968*, JO Ete 1968, IOC Archives.
- 91 Arturo U. Illia to José Oriani, 14 August 1963, JO Ete 1968, IOC Archives.
- 92 José Oriani and Alberto P. Petrolini to the Members of the International Olympic Committee, 20 August 1963, JO Ete 1968, IOC Archives. See Alberto Prebisch to the Members of the International Olympic Committee, 16 August 1963, JO Ete 1968, IOC Archives.
- 93 In a recent article, Alison M. Wrynn has wrongly indicated that Buenos Aires “was a serious competitor for these Games.” See Alison M. Wrynn, “‘A Debt Was Paid Off in Tears’: Science, IOC Politics and the Debate about High Altitude in the 1968 Mexico City Olympics,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 23, no. 7 (2006), 1156.
- 94 For an account of Menem’s years see Romero, *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, 285-317; and the essays in *The Politics of Institutional Weakness. Argentine Democracy*, eds. Steven Levitsky and Maria Victoria Murillo (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005).
- 95 José Ignacio Lladós, “El sí que enciende la gran ilusión,” *La Nación*, March 8, 1997.
- 96 See Víctor Lupo, *Historia política del deporte argentino, 1610-2002* (Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 2004), 449.
- 97 “El precio de ser la sede,” *La Nación*, March 5, 1997.
- 98 The IOC has subsequently developed a two-stage process. Cities are first *applicants* and only after passing an initial evaluation, they advance to the second stage and become *candidates*.
- 99 *Buenos Aires 2004*, 1: 12.
- 100 For a detailed description of the ‘Olympic corridor,’ see *The Best City for the Best Games* (Buenos Aires: n.p., 1997), 13-21.
- 101 *La Nación*, February 21, 1997.
- 102 See, for example, the Monaco IOC member’s comments in *La Nación*, July 17, 1997.
- 103 See José Ignacio Lladós, “El ciclo olímpico de Buenos Aires,” *La Nación*, June 15, 2004.
- 104 *La Nación*, September 30, 1997
- 105 For an analysis of De la Rúa’s government, the causes of the crisis, and the crisis itself see Romero, *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, 333-349.



- 106 *La Nación* , January 26, 2002.
- 107 Richard W. Pound, *Inside the Olympics. A Behind-the-Scenes Look at the Politics, the Scandals, and the Glory of the Games* (Etobicoke, Ontario: J. Wiley & Sons Canada, 2004), 201.
- 108 Ibid.
- 109 See Marcelo Garraffo's, Anibal Ibarra's, and Hernán Lombardi's, former sate secretary of sport, mayor of Buenos Aires, and minister of tourism respectively, comments in *La Nación*, October 14, 2000; and January 26, 2002. Also see the last section of this article.
- 110 McIntosh, "The Olympic Host City Bid Process: Facing Challenges and Making Changes," 313.
- 111 For the historical evolution and descriptions of Buenos Aires see, for example, David J. Keeling, *Buenos Aires. Global Dreams, Local Crises* (New York: John Wiley, 1996); James R. Scobie, *Buenos Aires. Plaza to Suburb, 1870-1910* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); Charles S. Sargent, *The Spatial Evolution of Greater Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1870-1930* (Tempe: Arizona State University Press, 1974); and James Bruce, *Those Perplexing Argentines* (New York: Longman, Green & Co., 1953).
- 112 Rein, "El Primer Deportista': The Political Use and Abuse of Sport in Peronist Argentina," 56.
- 113 See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; Verso, 1991).
- 114 *La Nación* , May 28, 2006. See also *Clarín* (Buenos Aires) (hereafter *Clarín*), May 28, 2006.
- 115 See *Clarín*, May 28, 2006.
- 116 *Clarín*, May 28, 2006. See also *La Nación*, May 28, 2006.
- 117 Mariano Ryan, "Por ahora, imposible," *Clarín*, May 29, 2006. The 2006 South American Games were originally awarded to La Paz, Bolivia. However, because of domestic instability in that country, in June 2005 this decision was declared void. In August of that year, Buenos Aires was elected to host the event. The 2006 South American Games were indeed organized in Buenos Aires from November 9-19. The event was far from stellar; it did not attract much public attention, and was marred by organizational inconveniences and by administrative and athletic controversies. See, for example, "Un combate que no fue, el desayuno que no se comió y las reservas que no estaban," *La Nación*, November 10, 2006; "Juegos desarreglados," *La Nación*, November 12, 2006; "Otro cachetazo para la organización," *La Nación*, November 14, 2006; and "Medallas de valores distorsionados," *La Nación*, November 19, 2006.
- 118 After Buenos Aires and Bogotá, Colombia proved incapable of hosting the event, the 2002 South American Games were finally held in four Brazilian cities, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Curitiba, and Belém.

*Stymied Expectations*

119 Steven Levitsky and María Victoria Murillo, “Building Castles in the Sand? The Politics of Institutional Weakness in Argentina,” in *The Politics of Institutional Weakness. Argentine Democracy*, eds. Steven Levitsky and María Victoria Murillo, 44.

120 Pound, *Inside the Olympics*, 200.

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