

**The Nuclear Winter Olympics**

by

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Submitted to the Departments of History and Arts Management  
School of Liberal Arts  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts

Purchase College  
State University of New York

August, 2019

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## Chapter One

The buzzer sounded and the arena exploded. Jim Craig was on the ice looking for his father in the stands and Herb Brooks left the rink bench and ran into the hallway. This may not sound significant, but it was. The United States had just beaten the Soviet Union Olympic hockey team in the 1980 Winter Olympics.

To understand the importance of the moment, one must understand the background and the implications. In May of 1951, the International Olympic Committee gathered in Vienna. Over the course of these meetings, the committee would debate issues that were about far more than just sports. One of the most contentious issues was whether they would allow the newly formed Soviet Union into the Olympics. In *Cold War Games: Propaganda, the Olympics, and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Toby C. Rider discusses that this was a shut and close issue because as long as the “Reds” respected the rules of the Olympic Charter, they would have the same rights as all other nations and be allowed a spot in the Olympic games in 1951. <sup>(1)</sup>

As the book goes on, he discusses how by 1945, it was clear that the Soviets intended not just to participate in the games, but to dominate in them.<sup>(2)</sup> Avery Brundage, president of the International Olympic Committee from 1952-1972 stated “Some misguided persons seem to think that Olympic sport can be made a political tool. This is as erroneous as anything can be. The minute political activities are permitted in Olympic affairs the Games are finished.”<sup>(3)</sup>

This was clearly not the case. George Orwell, famous novelist and essay writer, stated that the Olympic sport was simply “war minus the shooting.” Naturally, the United States government viewed the Olympics the same way. This sentiment was only made stronger as the United States realized that the Soviet Union’s only purpose for sports was to win, that way they

would be able to move ahead and use it for propaganda on how the socialist man was superior or directly inflating the strength of the Soviet Union to its people. <sup>(4)</sup>

Harry Truman took the Olympics very seriously when it came to the Cold War. He began a worldwide initiative aimed at correcting the Soviet Union's lies about the United States by pushing sportsmanship and friendliness onto the athletes. Ultimately, the United States knew what the Soviet Union was doing: Hiring professional athletes to army positions so they would be deemed amateur for the Olympics. Due to this Washington had complete control over the athletes going to the Olympics and often times, they weren't as amateur as they would tell the International Olympic Committee.

As Eisenhower took over the presidency from Harry Truman, he continued to have the approach of using the Olympic Games as a form of warfare in the Cold War. He acknowledged that the best way to defend the United States sporting culture around the world was to have a team that would win every gold medal. It went so far as to being debated in the United States Congress on whether or not the United States Olympic Team should receive federal funding in a blatant effort to make the team more competitive against the Soviet Union, who paid their athletes as members of their army to be able to capture strong professional level athletes for their team.

The approach remained similar when President John F. Kennedy replaced Dwight Eisenhower. When asked about the strength of the Olympic team and the push to bring the Olympic Games to Detroit for 1968, the following dialogue occurred:

***Reporter:** Mr. President, concerning effective action in another area, the Olympic Games, some time ago you expressed concern at the amateur*

*groups who were bickering to such an extent that the U.S. might not be able to field a qualified team in the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo. Has that question been settled to your satisfaction, and, two, will the United States grant the usual federal money to aid in the effort to get the Olympic Games to the United States and to Detroit specifically for the first time since 1932, in 1968?*

**President Kennedy:** *In the first place, as you know, General MacArthur did the arbitration, and did it most effectively, and therefore we feel that problem is going to be solved, in the question of accrediting amateur athletes.*

*Secondly, on the question of where the 1968 Olympics will be, that is a matter for the Olympics Committee. If there is a chance to get it to the United States, we will strongly support it, and if Detroit is chosen, I would certainly be wholly in favor of the United States doing everything it could to make it a success. I am a strong believer in the Olympic Games, and I hope the United States has a strong amateur team representing this country, because this is a vigorous society, and we would like to demonstrate it. <sup>(5)</sup>*

Of course, while all of these events were unfolding at the international level, the United States was on track to begin a decade of turmoil beginning with the administration of Richard Nixon.

During the Nixon administration, which began in 1969, the country faced an internal battle over Vietnam, as well as the overarching Cold War. On top of all that, 1972 was a presidential election year and it would turn out to be no ordinary presidential election, as ultimately, a sitting president would resign in disgrace and political scandal.

1972 was also an Olympics year. The United States had plenty to be excited for—after all, they were the best in the world at basketball and undefeated overall in Olympic play, having gone 63-0, winning every gold medal. On September 10, 1972, it would be time to send the Soviets home defeated and shamed. It was supposed to be a great opportunity to boost American confidence and defeat its Cold War enemies. Shockingly, it did not turn out that way.

During the Gold Medal game, the Americans were down with just seconds to go. One of the Soviet athletes knocked down guard Doug Collins, calling for foul shots. Collins successfully made both free throws and turned the score from 49-48 in favor of the Soviets to 50-49 in favor of the United States.

After the following play, the United States believed it had won and fans rushed the court in celebration. The celebration was short lived, however, as a referee's call gave the Soviets one last shot to dethrone the Americans. The call is still disputed to this day. The Soviets then miraculously won the game on a last-second basket. <sup>(13)</sup> “To this day, 40 years after that final buzzer sounded, 12 silver medals lay unclaimed in a storage room maintained for the Olympic Museum in Lausanne, Switzerland. History says those silver medals belong to the Americans. Doug Collins says that “history” is mistaken.” <sup>(14)</sup>

The Soviets had beaten the Americans at their own game, a huge blow to American confidence. The players to this day refuse to acknowledge that the Soviets won the game.

On June 17, 1972, five men broke into and bugged the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate Hotel. The headline on the front page of the Washington Post the following day read "Five Held in Plot to Bug Democratic Offices Here".<sup>(6)</sup>

Sensing blood in the water, the United States Attorney General appointed a special prosecutor to investigate, former Solicitor General and aide to John F. Kennedy, Archibald Cox.<sup>(7)</sup> Cox's job was to focus on all things Watergate. As time went on, Nixon's *house of cards fell*, as his paranoia caused a cover-up that grew larger than the original crime.

Due to the ferocious reporting of two journalists, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, the President's lies were uncovered to the public through a set of leaks they gathered from an insider they referred to as "Deep Throat." In 2005, the source would be revealed as Mark Felt, then second in command at the FBI.

Woodward and Bernstein broke story after story, none more important than White House Counsel John Dean admitting he was aware of and participated in the Watergate cover-up.<sup>(8)</sup> Nixon, who had just months before won one of the largest landslides in Electoral College history, was on the ropes and facing impeachment or resignation.

On July 17, 1973, the Washington Post reported another huge revelation. Nixon had a secret recording device in the White House Oval Office that taped every conversation.<sup>(9)</sup> Investigators in the Office of the Special Counsel immediately demanded Nixon turn over the tapes for review. Nixon instead cited Executive Privilege to avoid submission. "Thus the stage was set for a great constitutional struggle between a President determined not to give up executive documents and materials and a Senate committee and a federal prosecutor who are

determined to get them," read the Washington Post on July 24, 1973. "The ultimate arbitration, it was believed, would have to be made by the Supreme Court." <sup>(10)</sup>

As it became more and more clear that Nixon was personally involved in the scandal, he began spiraling into a deeper state of paranoia. The pinnacle night for Nixon's demise was when he fired his Attorney General and Deputy Attorney General, and then ordered the firing of Special Prosecutor, Cox. Dubbed the "Saturday Night Massacre," the firing only led to stronger calls for Nixon's impeachment on grounds of obstructing the investigation. Nixon's problems would only get worse, as his lawyers notified investigators they lost 18 minutes of the White House tapes, which had been ordered by the Supreme Court to be turned over. A new special prosecutor, Leon Jaworski, a Lyndon Johnson confidante, had renewed efforts to justify the case to have Nixon removed from office. <sup>(11)</sup>

In his January 1973 State of the Union address, President Nixon amazingly called for an end to the Watergate investigation. In June 1973, however, the Watergate investigation found its "Smoking Gun." Despite his denials, Nixon was on tape talking about the Watergate cover up. <sup>(12)</sup> Just a month and a half later, on August 8, 1974, Nixon announced he would resign the Office of the Presidency. To this day, Richard Nixon is the first and only President to resign.

In 1973, a surprise attack by Egypt and Syria against Israel on the holiest day of the year led to the "Yom Kippur War." Due to escalations in the war and that it was Israel versus most of the Middle East, OPEC decided to place an oil embargo on any country deemed to be supporting Israel. Prices of oil skyrocketed in the United States and gas shortages followed. Americans were forced to wait on gasoline lines based on an odd-even rationing method, depending on the last number of a license plate.

In 1975, things turned for the worse in Vietnam. On April 29<sup>th</sup>, the People's Army of Vietnam (North Vietnam) launched an offensive that would end the Vietnam War in its favor. By the end of the following day, the South Vietnamese capital, Saigon would fall to the Communist forces. Shortly thereafter, Saigon would be renamed after the North leader, Ho Chi Minh and the reunification of Vietnam began as a wholly communist state.

In January 1977, there was a changing of the guard in the White House from Gerald Ford, who had replaced Nixon, to Jimmy Carter. The Carter years, however, were no boost to American confidence. In 1979, while the 1980 Olympic team was getting ready for its big showing in Lake Placid, a group of Iranian college students stormed the United States embassy in Iran. They successfully took control of the building and held more than 60 Americans hostage for what would become 444 days, until they were released just hours after the inauguration of the next President, Ronald Reagan - a situation many believe was a swipe at Carter. <sup>(15)</sup>

Jimmy Carter's presidency has famously been dubbed the "Malaise Period." During his famous "Crisis of Confidence" speech, Carter laid out an America without hope and optimism, which set the country at an all-time low in morale, as the President himself talked about the country in such a poor way. In the following excerpt from Carter's speech, he detailed an America that was, in his opinion, deeply troubled:

*"It's clear that the true problems of our nation are much deeper -- deeper than gasoline lines or energy shortages, deeper even than inflation or recession. And I realize more than ever that as President I need your help. So, I decided to reach out and to listen to the voices of America."* <sup>(16)</sup>



As stated, 1980 was an Olympics year. The United States selected Herb Brooks, coach of the Minnesota Gophers, to lead their hockey team. Brooks implemented an intense regiment to try and get a team primarily comprised of college students to beat the Soviet Union, a world-class team of “all-stars” that had beaten several professional National Hockey League teams, as well as National teams, including mighty Canada, containing professional players. (The United States and many other capitalist countries did not send their professional athletes to the Olympic games). Many believe Brooks fought so hard to be coach because he had been cut as a player from the 1960 Olympic Hockey team just before the first game, and his team had gone on to win the gold medal without him.

While all of these events unfolded, the team, Herb Brooks and General Manager Craig Patrick had assembled wasn't thinking about politics. While researching this topic, I had the opportunity to interview team captain Mike Eruzione and defensemen Ken Morrow. According to both of them, they had no idea that people were even watching that closely, as American audiences weren't necessarily excited about this ragtag team of amateurs, and Brooks kept his players isolated from the press. Morrow made sure to state that this was before social media and there was no easy way for them to get information without Herb Brooks standing in the way.

When I spoke to Eruzione, he said:

*“We had no idea people were even watching other than people in Lake Placid. We had no clue that the world was watching or the country was watching the way they were. We weren't allowed to talk to the media while there so we didn't know what people were writing or saying. We obviously knew people in Lake Placid were watching and that our families and friends were excited, but we didn't have any clue as to what was going on globally.” (17)*

## Chapter One Notes:

1. Toby C. Rider. *Cold War Games: Propaganda, the Olympics, and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Illinois: The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, 2016. 29
2. Toby C. Rider. *Cold War Games: Propaganda, the Olympics, and U.S. Foreign Policy*. Illinois: The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, 2016. 43
3. Cited in Harold Lechenperg, ed., *Olympic Games 1960*(New York: A.S. Barnes 1960), 5
4. Barrett M. Reed, "Moscow Observations: Soviet Conduct of Tournaments as indicated by Recent Women's World Class Chess Championship," 23 January 1950, RG59, Central Decimal file, 1950-54, Box 5167, 861.4536/I-2350, NA.
5. United States, White House "News Conference by John F. Kennedy." *JFK Library*, 52., March 21. 1963, [www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-press-conferences/news-conference-52](http://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-press-conferences/news-conference-52).
6. Alfred E. Lewis, "Five Held in Plot to Bug Democratic Offices Here," *Washington Post* June 18<sup>th</sup>, 1972, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2002/05/31/AR2005111001227.html>
7. George Lardner Jr, "Cox is Chosen as Special Prosecutor", *Washington Post*, May 19<sup>th</sup>, 1973.  
[https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/cox-is-chosen-as-special-prosecutor/2012/06/04/gJQAEhPDJV\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.f8c0c8d6a645](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/cox-is-chosen-as-special-prosecutor/2012/06/04/gJQAEhPDJV_story.html?utm_term=.f8c0c8d6a645)
8. Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, "Dean Alleges Nixon Knew of Cover-up Plan, *Washington Post*, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1973.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/dean-alleges-nixon-knew-of-cover-up-plan/2012/06/04/gJQAgpyCJV\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.e291d15cbb67](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/dean-alleges-nixon-knew-of-cover-up-plan/2012/06/04/gJQAgpyCJV_story.html?utm_term=.e291d15cbb67)

9. Lawrence Meyer, “President Taped Talks, Phone Calls; Lawyer Ties Ehrlichman to Payments”, *Washington Post*, July 17<sup>th</sup>, 1973.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/president-taped-talks-phone-calls-lawyer-ties-ehrichman-to-payments/2012/06/04/gJQAc9CCJV\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.1bd84fc33d65](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/president-taped-talks-phone-calls-lawyer-ties-ehrichman-to-payments/2012/06/04/gJQAc9CCJV_story.html?utm_term=.1bd84fc33d65)

10. The Government Acts, The Watergate Story, accessed October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018,

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/watergate/part2.html>

11. The Government Acts, The Watergate Story, accessed October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018,

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/watergate/part2.html>

12. Nixon Resigns, The Watergate Story, accessed October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2018,

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/special/watergate/part3.html>

13. Taps Gallagher “The 1972 Olympic Basketball Final: ‘Stolen Glory’,” 08/01/2012,

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/taps-gallagher/stolen-glory\\_b\\_1710545.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/taps-gallagher/stolen-glory_b_1710545.html)

14. Gallagher “The 1972 Olympic Basketball Final: ‘Stolen Glory’,”

15. Mike Eruzione, Phone call, September 21, 2018.

16. Iran Hostage Crisis, HISTORY, Accessed October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

<https://www.history.com/topics/middle-east/iran-hostage-crisis>

17. Jimmy Carter, Energy and the National Goals - A Crisis of Confidence, (speech,

Washington, DC, July 15<sup>th</sup>, 1979), American Rhetoric

<https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/jimmycartercrisisofconfidence.htm>

## Chapter Two – The Game

“The excitement and tension building, the Olympic center filling to capacity. The face value of a top ticket for tonight’s game, \$67.20. Outside, they’re exchanging hands at three times the face value,” Al Michaels commentated as he prepared to call the play by play for the highly anticipated Olympic game between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Earlier that year, the Soviet Union played the NHL All-Star team and soundly defeated them 6-0 in a shutout victory. The Soviets were as good as ever, essentially a team of professionals. No one in their right mind thought a group of college kids were going to defeat them during the Olympics—that is, except for Herb Brooks.

On February 9, 1980, the United States Olympic Hockey team would have another shot in an exhibition game against the Soviets at Madison Square Garden in New York City. Before the game, the Soviets were presented the Challenge Cup, their trophy for defeating the NHL All-Star team months earlier. If the fact they were playing the Soviets wasn’t intimidating enough, now this young group of college kids were watching the Soviet Captain, Boris Mikhailov carry a trophy symbolizing their victory over a dream team of players considered the greatest hockey players in the National Hockey League.

The game would be a disaster for the United States. They would lose 10 – 3 to the Soviets, and if that wasn’t bad enough, defenseman Jack O’ Callahan suffered a knee injury. Herb Brooks made the call to keep him on the team anyway, and he recovered just enough to play in the Olympic rematch against the Soviets weeks later.

As the 1980 Olympic games began in the sleepy upstate town of Lake Placid, NY, the crowd was wild with excitement, the small arena filled to capacity. Every time an American

player slammed a Soviet player into the boards or down to the ice, the crowd went nuts. While the players themselves weren't paying attention to the political implications, the crowd was.

When I spoke to United States Captain Mike Eruzione, he stated:

*"We didn't know what was going on around us. For us it was a hockey game. Whether you agree or disagree with the Soviet Union and their way of life, you still respected their hockey team and their hockey players. And we never once brought up if we win this game, we beat the Russians and the wall's going to come down. There was never any discussion other than a hockey game."* <sup>(18)</sup>

Just 3:25 into the game, Boris Mikhailov hooked Rob McClanahan, tripping him to the ice, a penalty that would lead to the United States playing with five skaters, while the Soviets played with only four. The power play for the United States wouldn't tally a goal, however, and the game remained scoreless.

At the 9:25 mark of the first period, Aleksey Kasatonov shot the puck, which deflected off the stick of Vladimir Krutov and passed through goaltender Jim Craig and into the United States net. The Soviets had broken the tie and the game was now 1-0 in their favor. But just under five minutes later, Buzz Schneider rocketed a shot and scored on Russian goalie Vladislav Tretiak. The USA had tied the game with just less than six minutes left in the period.

Shortly thereafter, with an enormous save, Jim Craig maintained the tie and stopped Valery Kharlamov from scoring off a quick shot off the face-off. During the final minutes of the first period, the United States remarkably held its own against the greatest hockey team in the world. In the book *The Boys of Winter*, Wayne Coffey discusses how without Jim Craig's amazing reflexes and ability to stop the puck from getting past him, the game could easily have been 4-1 or 5-1<sup>(19)</sup> However, the dream began to fade as the Soviets scored yet again as Sergey

Makarov cashed in on his own rebound and shot it into the top left corner of the net. The score was now 2-1 with just two and a half minutes left in the first period. As hopes dimmed, the dream was rekindled in the last few seconds of the period as the Americans' Mark Johnson scored a breakaway goal with one second remaining on the clock. The Soviet coach, Viktor Tikhonov verbally disputed the validity of the goal as the clock read 0:00 on the period, but the goal stood as the referees deemed it was scored with just one second left.

As the second period began, Vladimir Myshkin replaced Tretiak as the Soviet goaltender, a shocking move by Coach Tikhonov. Within the first minute of the period, the United States took a tripping penalty by John Harrington. This led to a Soviet powerplay goal by Alexander Maltsev and a 3-2 lead, which would continue through the end of the period.

During the 3<sup>rd</sup> period, the United States had their turn on the powerplay as the Soviets took a penalty for a high stick infraction, which led to a huge goal at the 48:39 mark – less than 12 minutes remained and the score was tied.

About a minute and a half later, Eruzione shot down the ice with the puck and took a shot. It went past Myshkin and the United States for the first time in the game had a lead. The score was 4-3 in favor of the United States. Eruzione told me he didn't feel at that time he had scored a potentially game winning goal, as there was still 10 minutes left in the game. <sup>(20)</sup>

The game continued for another 10 minutes - back and forth – up and down the ice with the United States consistently clearing the puck out of its defensive zone. The clock ticked down agonizingly slow to the final minute as Jim Craig continued to make incredible saves in the U.S. goal.

In the final ten seconds, the crowd began to scream the countdown. And then Al Michaels shouted the iconic line on the television broadcast, “Five seconds left in the game. Do you believe in miracles? YES!”

**Chapter Two Notes:**

18. **Mike Eruzione**, Phone Call, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018.
19. **Wayne Coffey**, *THE BOYS OF WINTER: The Untold Story of a Coach, a Dream, and the 1980 U.S. Olympic Hockey Team*(New York: Crown Publishers), 2005, 72.
20. **Mike Eruzione**, Phone Call, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2018.

### Chapter Three – The Legacy

The 1980 game between the Americans and the Soviets, which became known as the “Miracle on Ice,” had a lasting legacy on hockey players around the world. Coach Herb Brooks would go on to coach the New York Rangers for three consecutive seasons before being fired for not winning a Stanley Cup. He would then coach the Minnesota North Stars, New Jersey Devils, and Pittsburgh Penguins for one season each before retiring from the National Hockey League. In 2002, he came out of retirement to once again coach the United States Olympic Hockey Team, leading the team to a silver medal.

Ken Morrow, a prominent United States defenseman immediately joined the roster of the New York Islanders following the Olympics and helped that team win four consecutive Stanley Cup championships. He is now deemed a member of “The Core of the Four,”<sup>(21)</sup> the players that were on the New York Islanders for all four of the Stanley Cup wins. He then went on to become an assistant coach of the New York Islanders, and now serves as the Director of Pro-Scouting for the team.

Through an email arrangement with the NHL Public Relations staff, I was able to interview Pat LaFontaine, who played for all three New York teams, the New York Rangers, New York Islanders, and Buffalo Sabres, as well as the 1984 United States Olympic Hockey Team. He is now a member of the Hockey Hall of Fame. I asked him what effect the Miracle on Ice game had on his hockey career and he told me:

*“You cannot overestimate the impact that the 1980 U.S. Olympic team has had on future generations. It certainly did on me as a teenager at the time. There’s no doubt the Miracle on Ice led to a giant leap in the game of hockey as a participatory and spectator sport in the U.S. I meet young players all the time, kids who*



*weren't born until long after 1980, who say the story inspired them. It goes down as one of the greatest moments in the history of American sports."* (22)

The story became the basis for the movie *Miracle* starring Kurt Russel as Coach Herb Brooks. The film has been rated the number two sports film of all time as of January 2017, according to a poll at *Sports in Movies*.

Over the years, other movies were created that analogized sports and the events of the Cold War, a prime example being *Rocky IV*. In that movie, Russian boxer Ivan Drago uses steroids to make himself so strong that he actually kills his American counterpart, Apollo Creed, in the boxing ring. Later in the film, American champion Rocky Balboa defeats Drago and, in a sense, wins the Cold War, while explaining to the Russian audience that the two nations can and should be peaceful allies.

Many of the United States players have gone on to be motivational speakers throughout the country. They use their experience as underdogs to motivate people to face their challenges. The entire 1980 American Olympic Hockey Team was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto.

The Arena at Lake Placid remains standing today and serves as a monument and museum celebrating the 1980 Olympics and the ice rink was renamed to honor Herb Brooks, who died in a car accident in August 2003.

As far as a legacy, the game and its participants had an immediate, huge rippling effect at reigniting patriotism. In one article following the game, it was discussed how incredible it was

that students of the Vietnam War era that once burned their flags and drafts cards now screamed “U.S.A.” at the top of their lungs in the Olympic Arena at Lake Placid. <sup>(23)</sup>

The victory caused a massive outpouring of joy from Americans. Finally, after years of hardship, the Americans once more had something they were able to celebrate. People referred to it as “We beat the Russians,” not “They.”

During an interview, captain of the team Mike Eruzione stated, “Us winning the gold medal didn’t solve the Iranian Crisis, didn’t pull the Soviets out of Afghanistan, but people felt better, people were proud, people felt good about being American, because they can relate to who we were: working-class, hard-hat kids representing them, in an athletic event that was far greater than a hockey game.”

On the Soviet side, it was never just a game. The players had “jobs” with the government, most of them were soldiers, but in reality, it was similar to when Elvis Presley joined the United States Army, they were ceremonial positions. These were not “amateur players,” they were seasoned professionals. The Soviets had a strong competitive nature and they refused to allow themselves to lose games. It was deemed as weakness to their nation.

A 2005 New York Times article discussed the Soviet reaction to the game. Coach Tikhonov kept screaming at the team that it was their loss. <sup>(24)</sup> Sergei Makarov stated that he doesn’t have his silver medal and that it is likely in a garbage can in Lake Placid. <sup>(25)</sup>

For the Soviet Union and the United States, the Olympics were far more than games. It was a chance to beat the other country, even if just at sports. I don’t argue that the Miracle on Ice was the end of the Cold War, but it definitely sparked a level of confidence America hadn’t seen in the years following Watergate, Vietnam, and the Carter malaise. The Soviets were so used to

winning that Tikhonov never even pulled his goalie from the net to get an extra skater towards the end of the game to try and tie it, a move that is used in most hockey games.

Over time, people have remembered the game as a change in the political culture of the world. Many have forgotten that it was not actually the gold medal game, it was the semifinals, and that the Americans went on to beat Finland in the gold medal round just days later. When the USA players stood up to collect their gold medals, they all piled onto the podium together and screamed the national anthem with the rest of the crowd. This moment, in my opinion, will go down in modern history as one of the proudest moments that the American people felt.

President Jimmy Carter actually called Herb Brooks to congratulate him and the team on their victory. "Tell the whole team that we're extremely proud of them," Carter said. "I think it just proves that our way of life is the proper way to continue on."<sup>(26)</sup>

One Soviet player stated in an interview for *Do You Believe in Miracles: The Story of the 1980 U.S. Hockey Team*, "We won so often, that we no longer felt the thrill that the Americans showed. On one hand, it was great to see their emotions, but for us, it was very bitter."<sup>(27)</sup> The game had not aired live in the USSR, so it wasn't until the following Saturday that the news reached the USSR. A soviet citizen in an interview for the same documentary stated "When the word got out that the Soviets lost and the game was shown in replay, no one believed in it. First of all, it's lost to the Americans, second, on American soil, third it was to the college guys, are they drunk or what? What happened?"

The USSR hockey team did go on to win two more gold medals, but then in 1989, the Soviets allowed six of the players from the 1980 Olympics to move to the United States and join the NHL, on the condition that they played one final world championship, one in which they won

the gold medal. The move to allow the players to go to the NHL was widely credited to Perestroika in the USSR (although at least one Soviet player deflected to the United States just years before, an embarrassment to the USSR).

Viktor Tikhonov stated in an interview, “When you win the silver medal, it’s an honor, but not in the Soviet Union; when we arrived back home, we wanted to quickly hide from the shame and outpour, in the streets people were saying ‘How come you lost? And to whom? A group of students?’”

Shortly after Miracle on Ice in 1980, coincidentally, the Soviet Union began to slowly collapse. Its Eastern European satellite countries began to gain independent strength. The morale boost in the United States, however, was not enough to save Jimmy Carter.

As the 1980 presidential election began, Jimmy Carter faced a primary from Ted Kennedy, a senator for 18 years and the younger brother of John F. Kennedy. Kennedy and Carter were polar opposites who, politics aside, did not like each other. 30 years later on September 17th, 2010, Carter blasted Ted Kennedy. "The fact is that we would have had comprehensive health care now, had it not been for Ted Kennedy's deliberately blocking the legislation that I proposed." <sup>(27)</sup>

The primary was a very divisive one, but Kennedy only picked up 13 states compared to Carter winning 26 states. Kennedy likely lost the election due to the 1969 Chappaquiddick Incident, in which he drove off a bridge with a young girl in the car, and fled the scene leaving the girl to drown, among other various reasons. In my opinion, with the way Carter’s America looked, had it not been for the baggage that came with being Ted Kennedy, Carter might not have walked out of that primary with the nomination.

While Carter won the primary 2:1 compared to Kennedy, he lost in a landslide to former California governor Ronald Reagan. Reagan ran under the mottos “Let’s Make America Great Again,” “Are you better off than you were four years ago?,” and “The time is now for strong leadership!”

Through the campaign, Reagan slammed Carter for the malaise period and promised a better America for all Americans. He promised that he would give tax cuts to the middle class to ease the financial burden that they were facing through the Carter years. But, perhaps nothing resonated more with voters that year, than the fact that Reagan was a hardline anti-communist dating all the way back to his days as president of the Screen Actors Guild. In FBI documents, it was revealed that during the 1940s, Reagan was an informant to the FBI turning in names of people he suspected to be communists in the entertainment industry.

Reagan would go on to win the presidency in one of the largest landslides in electoral history. He carried 44 states, and Carter only carried 6. Reagan began to take a firm stance against communism that had been missing during the Carter years. Over time, leadership in the Soviet Union changed and new Premier, Mikhail Gorbachev pushed for an end to the Cold War during repeated meetings with Reagan.

During the Carter years, there was a calm approach to the Soviet Union and the arms race slowed, but Reagan, given his competitive nature, implemented programs that would escalate the arms race once more. In *Politics on Ice*, author James Bifulco strongly compared Reagan’s competitive nature to the attitudes of the 1980 Olympic hockey game.

Reagan’s hardline anti-communist views were appreciated by the Americans. As the Cold War began to calm down, Reagan would win a second term in an even larger landslide against

Carter's Vice-President Walter Mondale. Mondale won his home state of Minnesota and Washington DC, the rest was won by Reagan.

As time went on, Reagan continued to work with Gorbachev to put an end to the Cold War. Reagan uttered the famous line, "President Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" in a moment that today symbolizes the end of the Cold War.

### Chapter Three Notes:

21. **Steffan Persson** "CORE OF THE FOUR," 02/12/2008, <https://www.nhl.com/islanders/news/core-of-the-four-stefan-persson/c-465507>
22. **Pat LaFontaine**, Email, September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018
23. **Soares**, "Cold War, Hot Ice," 208
24. **Bernard Goldberg**, Do You Believe in Miracles: The Story of the 1980 U.S. Hockey Team, HBO
25. **Dave Anderson**, "The Other Side of the Miracle on Ice," *New York Times*, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2005, <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/22/sports/hockey/the-other-side-of-the-miracle-on-ice.html>
26. **Dave Anderson**, "The Other Side of the Miracle on Ice," *New York Times*, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2005, <https://www.nytimes.com/2005/02/22/sports/hockey/the-other-side-of-the-miracle-on-ice.html>
27. **Robert Siegal**, "'Red Army' Explores How The Cold War Played Out On Ice", Interview by Robert Siegal, January 22<sup>nd</sup>2015, <https://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=378916505>
28. **Peter Maer**, "Time Has Not Cooled Jimmy Carter/Ted Kennedy Feud," *CBS News*, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/time-has-not-cooled-jimmy-carter-ted-kennedy-feud/>

## Chapter Four - Conclusion

There's no doubt that losing the 1980 Olympic hockey game to the United States was a blow to the Soviet Union. According to a CBS broadcast on February 23rd, 1980, the news of the defeat came on a day dedicated to military victories in the Soviet Union. The nation marked the 62nd anniversary of the formation of the Soviet Army and Navy. <sup>(29)</sup>

According to the same report, one man watching the game in a TV store stated "Carter must have ordered them to win." <sup>(30)</sup> The report ends by stating that the last thing the Soviet Union needed was a defeat of any kind by the United States.

The next report on the same show, discusses how at a news conference, following the victory, the journalists gave the United States team a standing ovation when they walked out. The report also states that the United States team was not worrying about the fact that there was still a statistical chance that they would not win a medal if they lost to Finland the next day, but instead were enjoying their newfound celebrity and defeat over the Soviet Union.

While it is seen that the Cold War ended when the Berlin Wall fell, I would argue that it never fully ended. When following the political and international relations that we have today, it gives the appearance that tensions with Russia are almost as strong as they were during the Cold War.

As Vladimir Putin rose to power, George W. Bush "looked into his soul" and found a man that he could trust. <sup>(31)</sup> Bush in an interview with CNN, went on to state that after the price of Oil rose, Putin changed and "followed an instinct for zero-sum. I win, you lose, vice-versa." <sup>(32)</sup>

Over the years, tensions began to get worse again. Putin began what appears to be a goal of rebuilding the former Soviet Union. In 2014, Russia annexed the former Soviet territory in the

Ukraine. The Western World, including the United States refuse to view it as Russian Territory to this day.

In 2011, Vice-President Joe Biden went to Russia for a meeting with Putin and while touring his office in the Kremlin, looked Putin in the eye and said “Mr. Prime Minister, I’m looking into your eyes, and I don’t think you have a soul.”<sup>(33)</sup>

During the 2012 presidential election, Republican Nominee Governor Mitt Romney argued that Russia was the biggest geopolitical threat to the United States. During a debate later that year, President Obama told Romney “The 1980s are calling and asking for their foreign policy back, because the Cold War has been over for 20 years.”<sup>(34)</sup>

Perhaps the biggest attack on our country since 9/11 was brought by the Russians with Vladimir Putin at the helm as they meddled in the United States election. On July 22nd of 2016, just as Former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton was preparing the stage to be formally nominated by the Democratic Party for President of the United States, leaked emails were beginning to drop online.

The Democratic National Committee’s email server had been hacked just weeks prior by a group of hackers with the pseudonym “Guccifer 2.0.” As time went on, the election would end with the victory of Donald Trump. Multiple intelligence agencies in the United States concluded that the Russians were behind the attack on the United States election and that President Putin was behind it all. This may not seem like much, but it’s clear that there are new tensions between the two countries as Vladimir Putin meddles in elections across the western world.

I can’t predict the future, but with the direction things are heading now, it seems clear that we are heading towards another Cold War. Currently, I believe we are in a situation where



things are as tense as they were during the Cold War, but with the exception of a direct arms race between the United States and Russia.

Overall, I think that the United States victory over the Soviet Union in the 1980 “Miracle on Ice” game had a strong effect on American morale. In my opinion, only one event since has united the country to that degree, which was the terror attacks on September 11th, 2001.

The United States of America has definitely seen turmoil again since the “Miracle on Ice” including the housing crisis and great recession, but it should not be discounted how strong of a boost something as simple as a hockey game can be to the world.

#### **Chapter Four Notes:**

29. **“Soviet Citizens Not Happy About Olympic ‘Miracle on Ice’ - CBS Evening News - February 23rd, 1980,”** Youtube, last modified July 14th, 2018,

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71baKPqg\\_0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71baKPqg_0)

30. **“Soviet Citizens Not Happy About Olympic ‘Miracle on Ice’ - CBS Evening News - February 23rd, 1980,”** Youtube, last modified July 14th, 2018,

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71baKPqg\\_0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71baKPqg_0)

31. **Rebecca Shabad**, George W. Bush: Putin ‘Changed’, The Hill, 05/01/14,

<https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/204949-george-w-bush-putin-changed>

32. <https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2014/10/28/bush-on-putin-2014.cnn>

33. **Justin Sink**, Biden to Putin: I don’t think you ‘have a soul’, The Hill, 07/21/14

<https://thehill.com/policy/international/212805-biden-to-putin-you-have-no-soul>

34. **2012 Presidential Debate**, ABC, October, 2012, Barack Obama

Jared this is a very interesting read. Your excitement and passion are palpable throughout the paper. However, as you outline the political history and try to interweave the significance of the hockey game, it sometimes gets confusing and the connection as to how exactly the game impacted the Cold War gets lost. Not sure you've made a strong, specific case for how it impacted the Cold War. Also not sure how Arts Management factors into this paper, but that's okay as I realize your focus was history☺

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