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Oslo or Helsinki: Germany's Re-Entry into the Olympic Movement

As the aggressors who started but then lost World War II, Germany was still a much-despised country in the late 1940s, particularly by the European countries overrun by the Nazis. Among the Scandinavian nations, the Norwegians in particular greatly resented the Germans for having occupied their country. These anti-German sentiments became conspicuous in the Olympic movement when host cities prepared invitations for the Olympic Games. Germany was not invited to the 1948 Games, and lingering resistance to German participation in 1952 prompted the Oslo Organizing Committee as well as a number of International Olympic Committee (IOC) members to want Germany's first postwar Olympic appearance to occur at the 1952 Summer Games in Helsinki rather than in Norway at the Winter Games. While this prevailing opinion concerning Germany's Olympic participation was that the aggressor nation should not return until July in Finland, a few forces inside the IOC worked to Germany's advantage, clearing the path for German athletes competing in both the Summer and Winter Olympics in 1952.

When Germany requested recognition from the IOC in 1951, the bitter feelings towards Germany as a nation remained, especially from the representatives of England, Denmark, Norway, and Belgium. Regardless, the IOC granted recognition to Germany in 1951 with the intention that the Germans would participate in the 1952 Summer Games in Helsinki. The Finns, who had been allied with Germany during the war in order to help them break free from Russian control, were more than happy to serve as hosts of the Games and welcome Germany as it made its reappearance in the Olympic movement. The city of Oslo had been selected to host the Winter Olympics five months before the Summer Games, and though the Germans had already been accepted as members of the Olympic Family again, enough tensions remained in Norway that

executive committee members – including future IOC President Avery Brundage – believed it best for Germany to wait until Helsinki to participate in the Games.