

# REVOLUTION, DEMOCRACY, AND SPORT: THE GUATEMALAN “OLYMPICS” OF 1950<sup>1</sup>

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On a small unpaved street near the center of Guatemala City, a seedy bar, La Antorcha, sports a painting of an Olympic torch, its flame trailing out toward a large Pepsi symbol. Down the hill, two blocks north, lies Mateo Flores National Stadium, where in 1950 just such a torch, proudly carried by a magnificent young Guatemalan athlete, made its triumphal entrance into the new stadium during the opening ceremony of the VIth Central American and Caribbean Games. This international sports festival, first held in Mexico City in 1926, was established for the purpose of bringing the Olympic movement to the mid-America region and was the first regional games in the Western Hemisphere recognized by the International Olympic Committee. Sixteen Latin American countries of the lands and islands ringing the Caribbean Sea were eligible to compete in the VIth Games, for which Guatemala had constructed a splendid stadium, gymnasium, swimming pool, tennis courts and other facilities. For Guatemala, the hosting of such a grand sporting event was without precedent. It was possible in 1950 because of the installation, six years earlier, of a revolutionary, social reform government dedicated to serving the Guatemalan people and conscious of the political benefits that could result from sponsoring the games. Guatemala's government faced strong opposition from within and outside the country, and it was hoped that the VIth Games would foster pride among its own citizens and gain both domestic support and the respect and friendship of other nations. Constructing the finest sport complex in the region and holding the VIth Central American and Caribbean Games were extraordinary accomplishments in this unusual and difficult period of Guatemalan history.

From the end of the colonial period in 1821 until 1944, most Guatemalan governments supported the interests of large landowners, the military, and foreign businesses, and paid little attention to the needs of city workers, farmhands, and especially, of indigenous people -- which in Guatemala, made up over half the population. The export economy of the country was almost entirely agricultural, being dominated by coffee grown in the highlands and bananas in the Pacific and Caribbean coastal plains. Guatemalan and foreign owners of plantations, along with the military, represented the country's wealth and power, and presidents were placed and maintained in office by these groups, sometimes for extended periods (e.g., Manuel Estrada Cabrera, 1898- 1920, and Jorge Ubico, 1931-1944). Three of the largest companies in the country (United Fruit, International Railways of Central

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America, and the Empresa Eléctrica [Electric Company]) were foreign owned and through convenient arrangements with the government enjoyed great freedom in their operations. United Fruit was the largest landowner and largest employer in Guatemala.

Guatemala was the only Central American nation with a large indigenous population which spoke neither Spanish nor was incorporated to almost any degree into the national social/political structure. However, the Indians were extremely important to the economic life of the nation as they formed the backbone of the rural work force, and their subjugation in this role was legitimized by laws that allowed forced labor and debt peonage and gave plantation owners life and death powers over their own workers and trespassers.<sup>2</sup>

During the summer of 1944, after thirteen years of government by intimidation, dictator Jorge Ubico was pressured into resigning. He left behind a substitute, General Federico Ponce Vaides, who hoped to continue indefinitely in the Ubico tradition. However, Ponce's ambitions were thwarted when on October 20, 1944, a combined group of military, intellectuals, students, and workers revolted and took over the government, installing a junta of two military officers, Francisco Javier Arana and Jacobo Arbenz, and a civilian, Jorge Toriello. In December elections were held and Juan Jose Arevalo, who had returned to Guatemala from Argentina to be the candidate of a coalition of several revolutionary parties, was elected president, winning about 86% of the total votes. The new government carried out the most dramatic social and economic reforms ever attempted in Guatemala, including establishment of a social security system, enfranchisement of (literate) women, ending forced labor for landless peasants, allowing the organization of labor unions, passing of minimum wage laws, and in general, reorientation of government spending toward social goals, such as improving education and health services. Many of these measures originated in decrees of the ruling junta, laws enacted by a legislative assembly, and provisions of the new constitution, written by a constituent assembly and completed on March 11, 1945, only four days before Arévalo became president.<sup>3</sup>

Arévalo's background was in philosophy and pedagogy. He had been a teacher and occupied an important position in the Ministry of Public Education in Guatemala in 1934, but conflicts with Ubico led to his leaving the country the next year for Argentina, where he was a university professor until returning to Guatemala in September of 1944. During his six years in the presidency, education had high priority and many new schools were built and advances made in education at all levels. Arévalo's general attitude has been described as "developmentalist, . . . he created incentives for the development of industry and the expansion of agricultural production without threatening the existing distribution of property."<sup>4</sup> Building the sport facilities for the VIth Central American and Caribbean (CA&C) Games was the largest construction project attempted by the new revolutionary government in its promise to promote "effective progress for the country, of direct benefit to the people of Guatemala."<sup>5</sup>

The year of the VIth Central American and Caribbean Games, 1950, and the post-war period that preceded the Games were troubled times in many parts of the world. The Middle America region was the scene of abundant political turmoil. In 1948 there was civil war in Costa Rica, and the governments of El Salvador and

Venezuela were overthrown.<sup>6</sup> Nicaraguan president Somoza claimed to fear an invasion of his country from Costa Rica by Cuban and Central American members of the "Caribbean Legion."<sup>7</sup> Martial law ("estado de sitio;" literally, state of siege) was in effect in Colombia during parts of 1949 and 1950,<sup>8</sup> and a coup in Panama in 1949 produced three presidents in five days.<sup>9</sup> Haiti accused the Dominican Republic of plotting against its government and appealed to the Organization of American States.<sup>10</sup> Dominican president Trujillo accused Guatemala and Cuba of harboring revolutionaries and encouraging rebellion against him, and Cuba in turn expected an attack by Trujillo's army.<sup>11</sup> Guatemalan newspapers reflected anxiety over the hydrogen bomb and the possibility of a global atomic catastrophe originating in the USA-USSR conflict and the threat of communism in Central America was also an occasional topic.<sup>12</sup>

With its new orientation, Guatemala did not endear itself to Latin American dictatorships and to the United States, whose main concerns in Central America were the preservation of right-wing governments and high profits for United Fruit and other U.S. companies. In 1949- 1950 Guatemala's new government was being labeled communist in the United States and was under pressure from conservative Guatemalans, whose wealth and power were in jeopardy, and others who disagreed with its policies.<sup>13</sup> Constitutional guarantees were suspended several times during the Arévalo presidency, the first time in 1945 when a plot against the government was uncovered, and during later episodes of insurgency, in Puerto Barrios in late 1948 and in Guatemala City in July of 1949.<sup>14</sup> Opposition to Arévalo's government grew progressively from 1945 to 1950 and included not only true reactionaries, but also many dedicated revolutionaries who disagreed with the government's positions. According to Nyrop, "Arévalo's last two years in power were spent primarily in attempting to complete his constitutional term without being overthrown."<sup>15</sup> Guatemala City's independent newspapers (principally *La Hora* and *El Imparcial*) were severe critics of the Arévalo government and the government occasionally responded with closings and censorship of these papers. Guatemala's government was accused in Great Britain of harboring a secret Soviet radio station and submarine base.<sup>16</sup> Political conflict between Guatemala and Britain dates from the nineteenth century, when the Guatemalan territory of Belice was occupied and converted into British Honduras.<sup>17</sup>

## CENTRAL AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN GAMES

**T**he first edition of the sport festival which became the Central American and Caribbean Games was held in Mexico City in 1926, the XVIth Games being hosted again by Mexico in 1990, making it the oldest continuing international multisport festival in the Western Hemisphere. Although the event was called Central American Games through the third games in 1935, and Central American and Caribbean Games since then, it has been held only twice in Central America proper, first in El Salvador in 1935, and the second and last time being the VIth Games in Guatemala in 1950.<sup>18</sup> The CA&C Games were an outgrowth of the International Olympic Committee's interest in establishing and promoting regional games in order to expand the Olympic movement worldwide through greater participation and

improved quality of athletic performance. IOC vice president Henry Baillet-Latour visited Mexico in 1923 to encourage the participation of Mexican athletes in the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris and the hosting by Mexico of a regional sport festival in 1926. Encouraged by a small group of sport enthusiasts and supported in part by fund-raising activities of two Mexico City newspapers, a delegation of nineteen Mexican athletes took part in the 1924 Olympics. At that time representatives of the Middle America region met in Paris and discussed the holding of Central American Games. A code of regulations ("Carta Fundamental") was adopted and Mexico City was designated as the site for the festival in 1926, and Cuba, in 1930.<sup>19</sup>

Guatemala was one of the founding countries of the Central American Games, participating in the first games in 1926, along with Mexico and Cuba. Fourteen countries were invited for this inaugural festival, but sport was little developed in much of the region and economic and political problems kept most countries away. The attendance of fifteen athletes from Guatemala saved the games, as the by-laws required the participation of at least three countries to make the competition official.<sup>20</sup> When Cuba held the second games in 1930, Guatemala was an obvious choice as host for the third games. The hosting distinction was offered to the Guatemalan delegation. However, they had to decline because of economic weakness of the country at that time and the severe lack of adequate sport facilities. The third games were held in El Salvador in 1935. Guatemala was the unanimous choice for the fourth games, but the dictator Ubico not only would not give his support, he did not even allow a Guatemalan sport delegation to participate in the 1938 games in Panama.<sup>21</sup> With each repetition the Central American and Caribbean Games increased in complexity, with participation of more countries and athletes, and more sports being added to the program.<sup>22</sup>

## **PROGRESS IN SPORT DURING THE FIRST YEARS OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT, 1945-1948**

**A**n early act of the Arévalo government had been to give autonomy to Guatemalan sport in December of 1945.<sup>23</sup> Granting autonomy to sport was consistent with a general loosening of government restriction of liberties, as was the newly granted autonomy of the University of San Carlos (the national university), and it represented a strong break with the past dictatorship.<sup>24</sup> With an eye toward participating in the Vth Central American and Caribbean Games in 1946 and bidding for the 1950 games, sport leaders, led by soccer, which had anticipated autonomy and already established an independent federation in July of 1945,<sup>25</sup> hurriedly organized individual federations and an umbrella confederation. In May of 1946 the establishment of the Confederación Deportiva Autónoma de Guatemala (CDAG) [Guatemalan Autonomous Sport Confederation] was formalized with the publishing of its statutes in the government's official gazette.<sup>26</sup> The Confederation had already begun its work, and in March, 1946, formed a National Olympic Committee (Comité Nacional Olímpico - CNO) to organize Guatemala's athletes for participation in the Vth Central American & Caribbean Games in Barranquilla, Colombia, later in 1946.<sup>27</sup> The Guatemalan delegation had to fight financial difficulties and public apathy to make the trip to Barranquilla. The CNO raffled off five automobiles to earn

part of the funds needed to send a group of sixty athletes<sup>28</sup> However, the Guatemalans went to Colombia bearing the authorization to bid for hosting the next games in 1950. Even though there existed historical reasons for granting Guatemala the games, the decision was not an easy one. There were several ties with Venezuela in the early voting, and it was only after the Guatemalan delegates threatened that if their country was not awarded the 1950 festival, they would never participate in the Games again, that the site was awarded to Guatemala.<sup>29</sup> The lack of overwhelming support for Guatemala was understandable, since the country had not even participated in the previous games and had no suitable stadium, gymnasium, baseball park or other sport facility. Sport federations that had been quickly improvised for Guatemala's participation in the Vth Games were reorganized and put on a more solid basis after 1946. By January of 1948 thirteen federations existed.<sup>30</sup>

With the establishment of democratic government in 1945 it became possible for journalists to work with much greater freedom than under Ubico's and earlier dictatorships. In April of 1947 the Asociación de Periodistas de Guatemala (APG) [Association of Guatemalan Journalists] was founded, and as a result of sport activity associated with the CA&C Games in Barranquilla and preparations for the 1950 Games, several associations of sportswriters and broadcasters were established. Even earlier than the APG, the Asociación de Cronistas Deportivos Juveniles de Guatemala (Association of Young Sportswriters of Guatemala) was formed in 1946, and Cronistas y Locutores Deportivos Asociados (Associated Sports Writers and Broadcasters), was organized in 1948 in response to difficulties that journalists were having obtaining free access to sporting venues, including the CA&C soccer tournament held in Guatemala that year. These associations were born in response to Guatemala's participation in specific sport events and lasted only a short time. Finally, the Asociación de Cronistas Deportivos de Guatemala (ACD) [Association of Guatemalan Sportswriters] was founded on March 21, 1949, and although its origin was related to the fever of sport journalistic activity during preparations for the VIth Central American and Caribbean Games, it has persisted and prospered, inaugurating its own building in Guatemala City's "Olympic City" in 1987.<sup>31</sup>

Guatemala gained experience in hosting an international sport event in 1948, when the IVth Central American and Caribbean Soccer Championships were held in Guatemala City. Teams from five countries of the region played their games in the city's best facility, built as the national soccer stadium in 1933, and with its capacity increased to about 25,000 spectators for the 1948 event. This was the first play under lights in the country.<sup>32</sup> Shortly before the tournament began two British warships had left their home ports for Belice (British Honduras). By March 2 the ships were in what Guatemala considered its national waters and had landed troops in Belice City. News from Belice reported fears of invasion by Guatemala and a demonstration by 10,000 persons in Belice City against Guatemala. At the conclusion of the soccer tournament's opening ceremony, singing of Guatemala's hymn was followed by a minute of silence in protest of British occupation of Guatemalan "national territory," after which the crowd roared, "Belice es tierra de Guatemala" [Belice is our land].<sup>33</sup> It was reported that at noon the next day 40,000 people marched through the streets of Guatemala City in protest against British aggression. The soccer tournament probably would have received much more attention had it not been for these political events.

## BUILDING THE OLYMPIC SPORT COMPLEX AND PLANNING FOR THE 1950 GAMES

Apparently in a move to influence the incoming president in favor of sport, on March 14, 1945, its last day in power, the Revolutionary Junta authorized the building of a national stadium at Guatemala City's Campo de Marte and the formation of a committee to direct and administer its construction.<sup>34</sup> Even before the Guatemalan team left for the 1946 Games in Barranquilla, President Arévalo had dedicated over one million quetzales (the quetzal was at par with the dollar at that time) for the dual purposes of making rural loans and building a national stadium.<sup>35</sup> In May of 1947 two decrees related to sport were passed by the National Congress. One stated that because sport is an activity of social utility, the new constitution required that it be supported by the government. The other declared that building a national stadium was of utmost importance for the promotion of sport and that the international commitment made by Guatemala in Barranquilla required proper preparation for the 1950 games. For this purpose it established new taxes on liquor, beer, cigarettes and coffee, with 50% of the resulting income to be given to the National Olympic Committee for preparation for the Games.<sup>36</sup> Critics liked to state that the government's expenditures on the Games were based on income from the sale of alcohol. Clemente Marroquin Rojas of *La Hora*, an arch enemy of the Arévalo government, suggested that the stadium should have been called Estadio de los Borrachitos [Stadium of the Drunkards].<sup>37</sup>

Planning for construction of the new sport facilities was well under way by mid-1947. The plan was ambitious to say the least. Surrounded by mountains, Guatemala City lies in a relatively flat-floored valley dissected by deep, steep-sided canyons. La Barranquilla, a rugged canyon that gashes the center of the city, was selected as the site for the stadium. The flimsy houses of poor squatters were cleared from the canyon and construction begun on a huge tunnel that would carry all the drainage underneath the stadium and other sport facilities to be built in the canyon. Displaced residents protested their removal from the canyon<sup>38</sup> and other opposition came from landowners who considered the government's offers for their property to be too low. An editorial in the government newspaper, *Diario de Centro América*, said no patriotic and conscientious Guatemalan could oppose the construction of the stadium by not willingly giving up his home or land and that the stadium was of great national importance and would contribute to the health of the nation as much as the construction of a hospital (the one for treating sick people, the other for keeping people healthy). The writer also suggested that arguments against the stadium construction and against freeing up the needed land were perhaps not economic, but rather, attempts to discredit the revolutionary government.<sup>39</sup> It was originally hoped that the stadium could be completed by the end of 1948, thus allowing two years for Guatemala's athletes to practice in it with strong spectator support and also to bring in income to help pay its costs of construction.<sup>40</sup> However, there were many delays and the stadium and most of the other installations were finished only a few days before the competition began, in late February of 1950.<sup>41</sup>

The new sport complex, the Ciudad Olímpica [Olympic City], included the stadium, gymnasium, sport palace, swimming pool, tennis courts, and open-air theater. Additional facilities that were built in other parts of the city included a baseball park, velodrome, rifle and pistol range, and a practice track at the Campo de Marte. Various plans for accommodating the visiting delegations were considered, the final decision being to house the male athletes in the Roosevelt Hospital, still under construction, the female athletes in the new Pamplona School, and officials of the delegations in the National Nurses' School.<sup>42</sup>



Ciudad Olímpica

In 1947 the Autonomous Sport Confederation (CDAG) named a nine-member National Olympic Committee (CNO), from which there would be formed a four-member Organizing Committee for the VIth Games.<sup>43</sup> As preparations for the games proceeded, conflicts developed between the Confederation and the Olympic Committee. At one point during 1948, a former president of the CNO, Lieutenant Colonel Roberto Barrios Peña, became president of the CDAG and dissolved the current CNO, establishing a new one with himself as its president.<sup>44</sup> However, the old Committee would not step down, so for a while there were two Olympic Committees. The old CNO paid for a series of eleven advertisements in *El Imparcial*, the most important independent Guatemala City daily, to state their case. They defended themselves from Barrios Peña's attacks and said that his claims were politically motivated and related to his candidacy in the Guatemala City mayor's race.<sup>45</sup> It was proposed in the Congress that a commission of congressmen investigate the problems that had come up,<sup>46</sup> A conciliatory commission of three prominent Guatemalans was appointed and through its recommendations (dated December 2, 1948), peace was

regained. Duties and responsibilities of the CDAG and CNO were outlined, and preparations for the VIth Games got back on track.<sup>47</sup> Edmundo Nanne and Antonio Yglesias, Jr., remained as president and vice president, respectively, of the CNO. Barrios Peña, president of the original Organizing Committee, had resigned that position in November of 1947, and the committee was reorganized by the CNO, with Federico Rölz Bennett as its president, effective February 1, 1948. Rölz remained in this position until late in 1949, when he resigned due to increasing politicization in Guatemala's sport leadership.<sup>48</sup> The final composition of the Organizing Committee was: Pres., Rafael Abascal de Anda; Vice Pres., J. Vicente Soto Marroquín; Treas., Rogelio Solórzano; Sec., Efraín Molina Flores; and foreign members: Manuel Roy (Panama), Humberto Chica Pinzón (Colombia), and Julio Enrique Monagas (Puerto Rico).<sup>49</sup> Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes, Guatemala's ambassador to Great Britain at the time, was designated by the IOC as its representative on the committee.

In December of 1948 the Technical Congress of the VIth Central American and Caribbean Games was convened in Guatemala City with attendance of the members of the Organizing Committee and representatives of eight of the countries that would participate in the games. The Congress evaluated the installations under construction, the program of events, and general regulations, and voted unanimously to grant final approval to Guatemala for hosting of the VIth Games. The delegates were treated to excursions to Amatitlán and Antigua Guatemala and President Arévalo held a special reception for them.<sup>50</sup> Charles Hunter, a U.S. Olympian in 1920 and athletic director and track and field coach of San Francisco's Olympic Club for 25 years, had been hired late in 1947 to organize Guatemalan preparations for the 1950 festival, and at the Technical Congress Hunter was named Technical Director of the VIth Games. However, at the beginning of 1950, he was replaced in this position by Jose Martinez Ceballos, a Mexican who had been one of the principal organizers and directors of the 1926 games in Mexico City, and Hunter's title was changed to "asesor técnico" [technical advisor] of the Guatemalan delegation.<sup>51</sup>

Great effort was put into preparation of the Guatemalan athletes, and foreign coaches were obtained for most sports.<sup>52</sup> The national teams traveled extensively for practice competition. For example, the baseball team competed in Mexico, volleyball team and gymnasts in Cuba, fencers in New York, boxers and wrestlers in California, swimmers in Panama and Mexico, cyclists in Costa Rica, shooters in El Salvador and Florida, women's basketballers in El Salvador and Mexico, and men's basketballers in Honduras and the U.S. In Mexico City when the women's basketball team lost to the Coahuila Dry Cleaners, 45-22, a Mexican reporter wrote that it was a crime and unpardonable of their coach to expose them to this level of play. Then they lost to the Adelitas, 40-1, and Guatemalan fans sent a telegram to the Guatemalan Olympic Committee urging them to withdraw the team from competition in Mexico immediately, "to preserve the dignity of our nation's sport."<sup>53</sup> The men's basketball team also had trouble with their opponents in the U.S., losing to Phillips University of Enid, Oklahoma, 85-27, and to the Phillips 66'ers, 131-16.<sup>54</sup> The national soccer team played in a tournament in Curaçao and competed against several South American professional teams that visited Guatemala during late 1949 and early 1950. The Guatemalan team not only competed against Brazil's Flamengo, Porto Alegre, and Madureira, but also combined with Guatemalan professionals against the

visitors.<sup>55</sup> There seemed to be no concern that play against and with professionals might endanger the amateur status of national team members. However, this question was raised in relation to Guatemalan participation in a cycling event in Mexico, and it was determined that the race was “genuinely amateur.”<sup>56</sup> There was criticism of the amount of money spent on trips for practice matches,<sup>57</sup> especially after the games were over and Guatemalans had not won as many medals as hoped.<sup>58</sup> Although there was considerable expenditure for travel during training, there did not appear to be any direct payment made to athletes, and working class Guatemalans (of which there were still few in sport) made personal sacrifices to train and compete. Some runners, including the distance champion Mateo Flores were docked pay by their employers when they missed work for track competition.<sup>59</sup> In January of 1950 all male athletes were installed in the Normal School where they ate and slept and left only to go to their jobs and to practice.<sup>60</sup>

The Olympic Committee established a publicity office and began publishing weekly informational bulletins in October of 1948, the 62nd bulletin appearing in January of 1950. The bulletins included photographs and information about the sport facilities under construction, Guatemalan athletes and their coaches, training preparations in countries of the CA&C circuit, and other news related to the 1950 Games. Magazines and pamphlets promoting Guatemala and the VIth Games and supplying information for visitors included *Ritmo Olímpico*, *Anuario Deportivo Continental*, and *VI JDCAyC Punteo*. Radio broadcasts were employed in Guatemala and other countries of the region.<sup>61</sup> Few experienced sports announcers existed in Guatemala, so to prepare for the needs of the 1950 festival a competition was held, and the winners received a course in sports broadcasting.<sup>62</sup> Many newspaper articles related to the games appeared in Guatemala City newspapers, and a prominent announcement appeared frequently, stating the number of days remaining until the beginning of the games and featuring the slogan, “HACIENDO DEPORTE HAREMOS PATRIA” [by participating in sport we build our fatherland]. Sport fever reigned, at least in the capital, and new publications sprang up to take advantage of it. Magazines such as *Stadium*, *Sucesos Deportivos* [Sport Happenings], and *Guatemala Deportiva* [Sporting Guatemala] were born and lasted a few issues to a few years. An unattractive guide to the city (*Guía de la Ciudad*) was produced by the Guardia Civil [national police] for visitors to the festival.

Chief of the Armed Forces, Colonel Francisco Arana, a member of the revolutionary junta of 1944, was a declared candidate for the presidential election that would occur in 1950. On the morning of July 18, 1949, Colonel Arana was killed on the edge of Amatitlán, thirty kilometers south of the capital, and that afternoon a violent uprising against the government broke out in Guatemala City. Fighting among elements of the army, the police and the general population was put down late the next day. President Arévalo restricted constitutional guarantees and closed the radio stations and independent newspapers. Two weeks later the newspapers were allowed to renew publication but were censored, especially on the topic of Arana’s death.<sup>63</sup> The government bought *Nuestro Diario* and tried to buy *El Imparcial*. When their suspension was lifted only *El Imparcial* and *La Hora* remained as independent newspapers. The Congress was considering new penalties for journalists “who attempted to damage the reputations of government officials.”<sup>64</sup> Many Guatemalans

spoke out against the government's inactivity in seeking Arana's killers. A persistent rumor was that Jacobo Arbenz, a member of the 1944 revolutionary junta, Minister of Defense in 1949, and an extremely likely presidential candidate in 1950, was involved with Arana's murder.<sup>65</sup>

In the aftermath of Arana's assassination and the subsequent uprising, Juan de Dios Aguilar, the construction superintendent for the stadium and sport complex, was dismissed from his post, apparently because of his friendship with Arana.<sup>66</sup> In support of Aguilar, the greater part of his engineering staff resigned. Angel Martinez, a very young and relatively inexperienced engineer was appointed to take Aguilar's place, and during the final months of 1949 and the beginning of 1950, additional government funds (including 500,000 quetzales for the stadium alone) were made available for the sport facilities, which were considered an "obra cumbre de la Revolución" [supreme accomplishment of the revolution].<sup>67</sup>

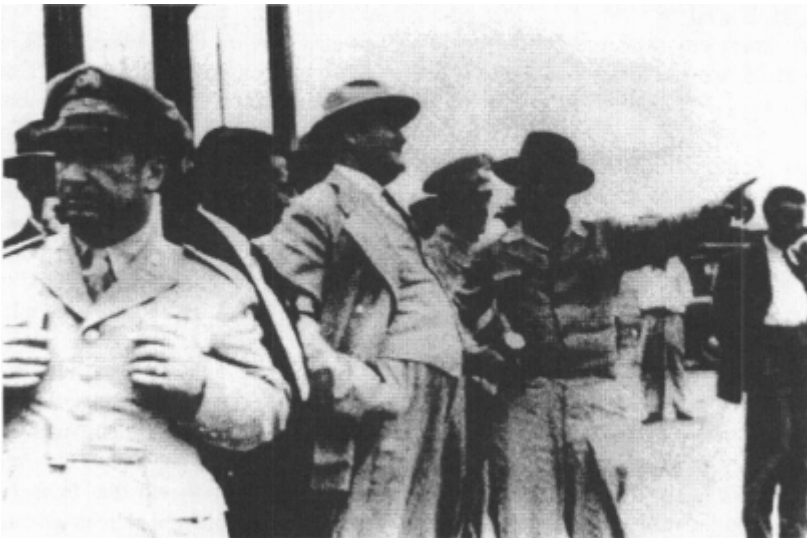
Luckily the construction was far along when the new staff took over, and eventually most of the planned structures were completed on time. However, there were still more problems coming for the sport complex. In September and October a tremendous storm hit Guatemala and left the construction site a mess. Because of disruptions in police and other services throughout the country as a result of the storm, Arévalo again suspended constitutional guarantees.<sup>68</sup> Days of continuous torrential rain throughout much of the country destroyed roads, bridges, crops, and telegraph and telephone services, produced landslides, and caused many human and animal deaths. At least 500 persons died and many towns and villages were isolated. The effects of the storm produced a profound collapse in the national economy. The Congress voted two million quetzales in emergency funds, all government workers and military personnel donated part of their salaries, and help came from U.S. cities, Mexico, Honduras, Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti, and Ecuador.<sup>69</sup> In addition to the effects of the October storm, construction at the sport city and also at Roosevelt Hospital was held up by strikes and shortages of materials, especially cement.<sup>70</sup>

As the opening date for the VIth CA&C Games drew near with the new construction still uncompleted, concerns for the success of the festival became more urgent. Representatives of several of the participating nations had visited Guatemala and seen the conditions first hand. Letters were carrying concerns to other interested parties, Technical Director Charles Hunter's correspondence with Avery Brundage, Vice President of the IOC, expressed his worries about conflicts in the Guatemalan sport leadership, certain activities of leaders and athletes that endangered the athletes' amateur status, questionable motives and ethics of some of the Olympic and Coordinating Committee members, and interference of administrators in technical questions of preparation of the athletes.<sup>71</sup> Brundage and IOC President Sigfrid Edström agreed that unless the Guatemalans assured them that Olympic principles and procedures would be followed, the VIth Games could be postponed or canceled, and if they insisted in holding the festival, it could be boycotted.<sup>72</sup> After receiving a suggestion from IOC chancellor Otto Mayer that an IOC sub-committee for Central America be created and given as its first task, controlling the Guatemalan Olympic Committee, Edström appointed an investigative commission composed of Avery Brundage (chairman) and four others to look into the problems in Guatemala.<sup>73</sup> Brundage was staying in close contact with his personal friend, Cuba's IOC member

Miguel Moenck, and they decided to visit Guatemala to evaluate the situation there. In November of 1949 Brundage traveled to Havana to join Moenck. Mexican IOC member Marte Gómez met them a few days later in Guatemala City.

The three representatives of the IOC inspected the new constructions, interviewed sport officials, and reported their findings about the preparations for the games in an open letter published in the newspapers. They were critical of Guatemala for having been so audacious as to bid for the 1950 games when the country had no proper sport facilities to offer, but then praised the construction of the greatest sport complex seen up to that time in countries hosting the Central American Games. They expressed confidence in the leadership of the National Olympic Committee and the Organizing Committee, declared the task of finishing the facilities a superhuman one, and finally, called for renewed efforts and cooperation for the timely completion of all preparations.<sup>74</sup>

President Arévalo's strong interest in the Games was demonstrated by his visits to the construction sites and his efforts in support of the event. In December of 1949, he amplified the role of Education Minister Raúl Osegueda as official coordinator and established a special executive task force consisting of the minister and one representative each from the Organizing Committee and the CNO to expedite preparations for the festival.<sup>75</sup> This was probably in response to the IOC commission's report. Also late in 1949 a separate office was established, with a budget of 20,000 quetzales, to coordinate housing and services for the tourists who would visit Guatemala during the games. Planning for handling tourists' needs included the purchase of beds and their sale or rental to individuals who wanted to let rooms to visitors, arrangements for increased farm production to satisfy food needs in Guatemala City, government stockpiling of foodstuffs to combat price gouging, and prohibition of the exportation of basic foodstuffs during the period of the festival.<sup>76</sup>



Arévalo visits Ciudad Olímpica

The sixteen countries eligible to participate in the games included Costa Rica, Colombia, Cuba, Curaçao, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Puerto Rico, Trinidad, and Venezuela. The political situation at the moment of the games made the participation of several countries unlikely, especially in the case of the conflict between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, Cuba, and Guatemala. Guatemala was opposed to all dictatorial regimes and had broken diplomatic relations with Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. However, only Dominican Republic and Venezuela failed to send delegations to the VIth Games, and the resulting participation of fourteen countries was a Central American and Caribbean Games record at the time.<sup>77</sup>

On February 23, 1950, the new sport complex was officially inaugurated. More than 40,000 Guatemalans filled the stadium, many of them school children who were given the day off and brought to the Ciudad Olímpica. Honored guests included President Arévalo and the Apostolic Nuncio, Monseñor Castellani. Public Works Minister Carlos Aldana Sandoval praised the engineers and workers who had participated in “the greatest physical accomplishment in Guatemalan history,” and Public Education Minister Raúl Osegueda spoke at length about the award of the VIth Games to Guatemala and the construction of the Olympic City being possible only in the current climate of revolutionary government. He contrasted present conditions with the tyranny existing before 1944: “In Guatemala, military tanks of oppression and death have been converted into machines of creation; weapons and soldiers now support the law, which has given us freedom of expression; today we are celebrating our regained honor. If the Olympic ideal is ‘always better,’ we have taken up the challenge.” Stadium construction superintendent Angel Martínez was given an honored position at the inauguration ceremony, and at the conclusion of his brief speech, in which he described the new structures as “worthy of the awakening of the people of Guatemala, by virtue of the revolution and our democratic government,” he was embraced by Arévalo, Aldana Sandoval, Osegueda, and many others.<sup>78</sup> The 3,000 sport city construction workers were given lunch on the stadium seats, and President Arévalo and his cabinet, all members of the Congress and Supreme Court, and many other dignitaries (around 500 persons altogether) were treated to a banquet in the new Sport Palace. Headlines read “Supreme Moment in the History of our Sport” and “Brilliant Inauguration of the Olympic City: Pride of the Revolution.”<sup>79</sup> The Olympic complex was truly the pride of President Arévalo and the Guatemalan government. *Nuestro Diario* said the sport complex is “worth two national palaces” (the national palace had been built by the dictator Ubico, whose tyrannical government was destroyed by the 1944 revolution) and went on to describe the new installations as “a project which the October Revolution has given to the people of Guatemala, a monument that has begun to inspire a healthy and vigorous national pride.” They also mentioned that land values around the sport city had jumped in value.<sup>80</sup> A government pamphlet listing public buildings opened in the first four years of the Arévalo administration said, “The national stadium alone would be sufficient for the glory of any government.”<sup>81</sup> In a long editorial, *Diario de Centro América* cited the “enemies of the revolution,” who first predicted that Guatemala would not be able to construct the sport facilities and hold the games and now criticize the “wasteful expenditure” of government funds on the Olympic City.<sup>82</sup>

Even Guatemalans opposed to Arévalo must have felt pride in the new sport facilities and the Games. Ogle described something resembling an “Olympic truce” during the festival: “Conservative Guatemalan circles, tired of their Labor regime, freely predict ‘trouble’ as soon as the revenue-earning Olympics are past.”<sup>83</sup>

Mateo Flores, hero of Barranquilla, where he won the 10,000 and 5,000 meter races and the “Central American and Caribbean Marathon” (21 kilometers), was honored at the ceremony inaugurating the stadium, and he also was flag-bearer for the Guatemalan delegation for the opening of the Games. A little sidelight involving this fine runner indicates that racism was alive and well in Central America. “Mateo” is truly a national hero. In 1952 he won the Boston Marathon, finishing 5 minutes before the second place runner, and President Arbenz awarded him the Order of the Quetzal, Guatemala’s highest honor, as the first Central American world champion. The Olympic Stadium constructed for the 1950 games today bears his name. However, Mateo Flores is not really his name. He was born Doroteo Guamuch Flores. Apparently, at the time of the 1946 games somebody decided it was an embarrassment for Guatemala to include an obvious Indian in its sporting delegation, so they left off Guamuch, his father’s surname, attached Mateo to his mother’s surname, and it stuck.<sup>84</sup>

## THE GAMES

The opening ceremony on February 25 was a grand affair, with the stadium brimming with spectators and the surrounding canyon walls covered by the overflow. One event of the day, the “Borinqueña incident,” became known even in the United States.<sup>85</sup> When Puerto Rico’s delegation entered the stadium bearing the Stars and Stripes, the Guatemalan police band played “La Borinqueña” instead of “The Star-Spangled Banner.” La Borinqueña was described as a traditional Puerto Rican song, the “Dixie” of Puerto Rican patriots who favored independence for the island. While the Puerto Ricans paraded, over loudspeakers came the voice of the Guatemalan government radio station saying that the “new Guatemala” of President Juan Jose Arévalo was leading the fight to liberate colonies from “imperialist powers.”<sup>86</sup> According to a United Press dispatch U.S. ambassador Patterson was “surprised and indignant” at what he considered a slur for the United States, and some foreign newspapers reported that Patterson was going to formally protest to the Guatemalan government. Foreign Minister Ismael Gonzalez Arévalo explained later that the Organizing Committee was in charge of the opening ceremony and any protest should be presented to the Committee rather than to the government, whose role in the program was only as invited guests.<sup>87</sup> Afterwards, during the competition, the U.S. anthem was played whenever Puerto Ricans occupied the winner’s platform. Their athletes supposedly boasted that they won so many events that the Guatemalan band had to learn the “Star-Spangled Banner” by heart.<sup>88</sup> The Borinqueña affair and its treatment by the independent Guatemalan press provoked a strong response from an official of Puerto Rico’s Independence Party, who wrote that La Borinqueña was considered by most Puerto Ricans to be their national anthem.<sup>89</sup>

Guatemala was attacking colonialism in the Western Hemisphere in the United Nations, the Bogota Conference of 1948, and other forums,<sup>90</sup> and the United States

was not the only target at the opening ceremony. Although relations with Britain were extremely strained over the question of Belice, “God Save the King” was played for the delegations of Jamaica and Trinidad when they entered the stadium bearing the Union Jack.<sup>91</sup> However, the stadium announcer made disparaging remarks about Great Britain while the two British colonial delegations paraded.<sup>92</sup> No mention was made of any special treatment of Curaçao, a Dutch colony at the time.

One of the most inspirational moments of the opening ceremony was the appearance of the Olympic torch in the stadium. Its journey across Guatemala had been eventful. For all the Western Hemisphere regional games, the new fire is kindled by descendants of Aztecs at a hill called the Cerro de la Estrella [Star Hill] on the outskirts of Mexico City. A few days before the VIth CA&C Games were to begin, this ceremony had been held and Mexican president Miguel Alemán made a speech and sent the torch runners off to the border. There, the Guatemalan relay took over, and soon afterwards, problems began. The first group of runners were mainly from Guatemala City. There were eighty of them and they were transported in three buses. Their first difficulty was that the director of the relay forgot to arrange for their first night’s lodging and meals. He spent the night partying in a Mexican border town, and the runners had to sleep in the park at Malacatán. Also the bus drivers had not been given enough fuel, and one of them ran out of gas in San Juan Ostuncalco and had to sit there with his load of runners until a kind soul of that community gave them enough gas to continue.



The torch finishes its “epic” journey

When the torch caravan reached the Quezaltenango province line, they were supposed to pass the flame on to the next group of runners, but they refused to give it up. The local runners accompanied the torch bearers to the outskirts of the city of Quezaltenango, but then the locals' pride would not permit them to let these strangers carry the sacred fire into their city. At that point a pitched battle took place, and the torch finally ended up in possession of the locals. They carried the flame into the central park of Quezaltenango where they were greeted by cannon shots, fireworks, and music, and the huge crowd gathered there witnessed a brief, but inspirational ceremony. Unfortunately, when the local runners had taken the torch it had come loose from its base, and carrying it without the base caused them to suffer painful bums.

As the ceremony in the park was finishing up, who should appear but the Guatemala City runners in their three buses. The people could see that they still had a torch, so they took it away from them and used its base to support the flame that had been brought in by the local runners. The official acts over, the Quezaltenango runners left the city to carry the sacred fire to the province line, where the next relay was to be waiting. However, due to all the excitement nobody had remembered to add fuel to the torch. When they were still a kilometer from the next town, the flame went out. Finally, in Tonicapán they delivered the dead torch to other runners for the final stage of the relay.<sup>93</sup>

The athletic program of the VIth Games consisted of baseball, basketball, bowling, boxing, cycling, equestrian events, fencing, golf, gymnastics, shooting, soccer, swimming/diving, tennis, track and field, volleyball, water polo, weight lifting, and wrestling. Men participated in all events, and women, in basketball, swimming/diving, tennis, and track and field. The 163 women who participated, out of a total of 1,390 athletes, amounted to around 12% -- down from a total of 1,540 athletes, with 19% females, in 1946, and around 15% female participation in 1938.<sup>94</sup> Bowling and golf had not been included in previous CA&C Games. Each of the ministers of Arévalo's cabinet picked one sport competition to inaugurate, and the Mexican Minister of Public Education was given the honor of pitching the first ball in the Guatemala-Mexico baseball game.<sup>95</sup> During the games many events were well attended, especially at night and when Guatemalan teams were playing. Counting the people on the hillsides surrounding the stadium, an estimated 100,000 persons saw the Guatemala-Colombia soccer game. The iron gates of the stadium were knocked down and many people injured.<sup>96</sup> Some factors that kept income down during the festival included the cheap prices of tickets and a loss of ticket income in the stadium because its north wall was too low to prevent people climbing over it. Teachers and some state workers were given time off and special work schedules were arranged to allow them to attend some of the events.<sup>97</sup>

In addition to the official sports two exhibition events had originally been planned: Pelota Maya-Quiche (the Mayan court ball game) and men's softball. Unfortunately, nobody could figure out how to play the Mayan ball game and no court was built, so plans for this event were scrapped, and as a substitute, paintings, sculptures, and archeological artifacts related to the Mayan game were displayed in the Sports Palace.<sup>98</sup> Guatemala made efforts to prepare a softball team, but this activity had to be dropped because of lack of interest of other countries.<sup>99</sup> Proposals

to hold billiards, polo, and chess competition as additional events were not accepted.<sup>100</sup>

The Curaçao/Costa Rica soccer game on the first night of competition could not be completed because of a fight between the players, followed by invasion of the field and joining of the battle by spectators, followed by the arrival of the police, who perhaps used more force than needed in quelling the riot. It was reported in the Costa Rican press that all their soccer players were in the hospital, which of course was true, as all male athletes were housed in the Roosevelt Hospital. The Costa Rican soccer team and officials held several heated meetings, and although they were beseeched to stay by Education Minister Raúl Osegueda, VIth Games Queen Miriam, and even a personal message from President Arévalo delivered by the chief of the Guatemalan delegation, they finally decided to withdraw from the competition and go home.<sup>101</sup> A newspaper article and editorial explained the incident as being planned ahead of time by Costa Rican communists who wanted to embarrass the current political leadership of their country by damaging relations between Costa Rica and Guatemala but an expatriate Costa Rican discounted this interpretation as political shenanigans.<sup>102</sup>

In contrast to the Costa Rican soccer players, one group of Nicaraguan athletes wanted to participate at all costs. Because they lacked adequate racing bicycles Nicaragua did not bring any cyclists in their delegation, but four of the Nicaraguans who had been selected for the team pedaled all the way from Managua to Guatemala City (925 kilometers in six days), arriving the day before the opening ceremony. They expressed their great desire to compete in the games (after resting up a little).<sup>103</sup>

There were several excellent performances in track and field. Cuba's Rafael Fortún won the 100 meters in 10.3 seconds. The wind speed was too great for his time to be recognized, but it would have tied Jesse Owens' 1936 and Harrison Dillard's 1948 Olympic record, which was not beaten until 1960. Herbert McKenley, the great Olympian from Jamaica was second, and Lloyd La Beach of Panama, third. McKenley, world record holder in 400 meters, won that event and also 200 meters, setting new CA&C records in both.<sup>104</sup> Puerto Rico won seven field events, setting new CA&C records in six of them.<sup>105</sup>

Perhaps the world's longest soccer game occurred on March 7, when Mexico and Guatemala quit in a 3-3 tie after 165 minutes of play.<sup>106</sup> They had already tied in a previous match, they tied again on March 8, and then in their fourth try on March 10, Guatemala finally won. The stadium announcer (broadcasting for national radio, "The Voice of Guatemala") proclaimed the victory to be "due to the revolution." This comment, seeming to take away the credit deserved by Guatemala's players, elicited a record volume of whistling in the new stadium. The announcer responded to the protest of the crowd by attributing it to "reactionaries."<sup>107</sup> As part of the ceremonies before the tie-breaking game of March 10, an Argentinean general invited Guatemala and the other countries to participate in the first Pan American Games, which would be held in Buenos Aires in 1951.<sup>108</sup> The soccer competition became so drawn out that some of the teams went home and a winner of the tournament was never determined.<sup>109</sup>

Important decisions were made in several technical meetings of delegates. In the Assembly of Delegates, Panama, with eight votes, was chosen as site for the VIIth Games. Mexico received four votes and Guatemala, one.<sup>110</sup> A Central American and

Caribbean Federation for track and field and a Central American Federation for basketball were founded, and the physicians of the sport delegations met and established a new Sports Medicine Federation, with the objective of offering technical and scientific guidance for the 1954 Games.<sup>111</sup>

Many members of the local and foreign press experienced difficult working conditions during the festival. Even *Diario de Centro América*, the official Guatemalan government organ, complained of lack of free access to the sport facilities and to information about schedules, participants and results. They blamed the Organizing Committee for favoring some journalists and discriminating against others.<sup>112</sup> Writers of the *Diario* were incensed that they, the government's voice, were denied press privileges. In revenge they even indulged in a little criticism and ridicule of the CNO, an activity which, when occurring in other newspapers, they had castigated as counterrevolutionary. The most vocal foreign critic during the games was Jules Dubois of the *Chicago Tribune*, who was well known to the Guatemalan leadership for his articles alleging communist influences in the Arévalo government. Dubois said he had never before encountered such poor treatment of the press as in the VIth Games.<sup>113</sup> Also, before the games began, the Organizing Committee proposed a monopoly for photography, restricting access to the sport facilities to specially contracted photographers, but they later gave in to demands for freedom of photographic privileges.<sup>114</sup>

A fine arts program accompanied the sport events. There were contests for architecture, sculpture, painting, drawing, prose and verse literature, and words and music for an anthem of the Central American and Caribbean Games.<sup>115</sup> All these works had to have some relationship to the general theme of sport and the sporting festival. The Mexican dance troupe of Ana Mérida, daughter of a famous Guatemalan artist, and other theatrical and musical groups entertained at the new outdoor theater.<sup>116</sup> There was also an "exhibition of artistic work of the revolution; art and literature born in the heat of the democratic climate of present-day Guatemala ... which will serve as a means of bringing art to the masses and making the thousands of foreign visitors who come to the VIth Games aware of the artistic production of Guatemala."<sup>117</sup>

A national exposition and fair was put together to coincide with the period of the sport festival. It was set up in the Campo de Marte and featured 240 stands, exhibiting Guatemalan industry, agriculture, and culture.<sup>118</sup> Guatemalan Indian groups demonstrated national folkloric dances, and a marimba band entertained visitors at the fair.<sup>119</sup> The marimba group was made up of inmates from the central prison; the name of the band, *Alma Cautiva*, means "captive soul." Activities immediately preceding the Games included the First Inter-American Congress of Women for Peace and the Congress of Latin American Universities.<sup>120</sup> Also prior to the games a beauty contest with entries from many of the Central American and Caribbean countries was held in Colombia, and the winner, Miriam Sojo Zambrano of Colombia reigned in Guatemala as queen of the VI Games.<sup>121</sup> During the festival, horse racing in the Hippodrome of La Aurora featured horses from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Mexico, and a performance by Guatemala's silver-medal equestrian team.<sup>122</sup>

An interesting sidelight on the closing ceremony was the presence of General Miguel Ydígoras Fuentes. Ydígoras had organized the Military Athletic League in

1921 and been the chief of the Guatemalan delegation that participated in the first Central American Games in Mexico in 1926. After a successful military career and service in the Ubico government, in 1950 he was Guatemala's ambassador in London. He was also a member of the Organizing Committee of the Sixth Games, having been appointed by IOC President Sigfrid Edström, as official representative of the International Committee.<sup>123</sup> General Ydígoras had a special personal motive for attending the Games. It would serve as a pretext for testing the waters regarding his possible candidacy in the upcoming presidential elections. However, the Arévalo government (as a supporter of Arbenz for president) did not want Ydígoras in Guatemala, so he was refused permission to come home.<sup>124</sup> Somehow he finally did wrangle permission and appeared in the closing ceremony. In the column "Saetas" of *El Imparcial* the final scene at the closing ceremony was described as follows: General Ydígoras addressed the crowd and suggested that as the lights of the stadium were extinguished, there would appear a delegation of ghosts, representing the spirits of the pioneers of Central American sport. "Many of the girls and women became apprehensive at the idea of this minute of apocalyptic darkness when the Olympic torch went out, all believing that the spirits mentioned would come and grab them by some part of their bodies." The writer ends with, "A veces vale tanto el espiritismo deportivo coma el socialismo del espíritu" [Sometimes sporting spiritualism is worth as much as socialism of the spirit], a dig at President Arévalo's philosophy of "spiritual socialism," not in favor at *El Imparcial*.<sup>125</sup>

The final sport event, a soccer match, took place on March 12, the day of the closing ceremony. Guatemala was leading El Salvador 2-0, with little time left in the game when a fight began between players. Substitutes from both teams joined in, and then the crowd invaded the field and entered the battle. Finally, firemen using their water hoses, along with the police, controlled the situation and got the players off the field. Unfortunately, the matter did not end that day. The Salvadoran government immediately brought its ambassador home for discussions, and alleging that Guatemalan police, soldiers, and public had beaten and injured Salvadoran athletes and spectators, an official protest was delivered to the Guatemalan government. Some Salvadoran radio stations and newspapers fanned the flames. *La Nación* wrote, "Let's break diplomatic relations with Guatemala and end this hypocrisy of false embraces and Judas kisses."<sup>126</sup> In San Salvador demonstrations and attacks began against Guatemalans and their businesses, and at least two persons were killed. A large group of Guatemalans took refuge in their embassy and were eventually evacuated by an Aviatega flight that was allowed to land at Ilopango air field. After around ten days of disturbances things got back to normal in El Salvador.<sup>127</sup>

The final results of overall competition were reported by the Association of Guatemalan Newspapermen to be Mexico in first place with 164.5 pts., Guatemala, second with 116.5 pts., and in third place, Cuba. The ranking in total medals won was Mexico (93), Cuba (79), and Guatemala (59). In gold medals, the order was Mexico (43), Cuba (24), Puerto Rico (12), Jamaica (10), Guatemala (9), and Panama (8).<sup>128</sup> In 1946 Guatemala had won only two gold and eight total medals.

Published figures for expenditures made on the games varied, perhaps in part reflecting the political stance of the source. One source, which should represent the government position, gave the figures of 7,550,000 quetzales, total expenditures on

the games; Q 2,850,000 to the CNO for preparation of athletes, and Q 4,700,000 for construction of the stadium and other installations.<sup>129</sup> The total national budget for 1950-51 was Q 45 million, so the games cost at least 17% of the annual budget. Income from the games was approximately Q 125,000.<sup>130</sup> Critics had bitterly complained of excessive spending and irresponsible fiscal accounting by the "Olympic millionaires" of the CNO. A year after completion of the VIth Games the CNO still had outstanding debt of 100,000 quetzales and had not submitted its final accounting and report, and the CNO's customs agent was under indictment for theft of Committee funds.<sup>131</sup>

The question of who would permanently control and administer the new sport installations arose at the beginning of the games and became a hot issue after they ended. The Sport Confederation (CDAG) wanted full control, but the national government, having spent so much money on the facilities, had in mind a different arrangement. They proposed a general administrator named by the president of the nation and a coordinating committee under the Ministry of Public Education. The role of the coordinating committee, which would consist of one representative each from the Ministries of Public Education, Defense, and Public Health, the CDAG, and CNO, seemed to go beyond mere administration of the sport installations. The CDAG thought this to be a step toward removing its autonomous status, which had been gained only after the 1944 revolution and the various sport federations wanted to control their respective installations.<sup>132</sup> For a few days after the games ended the Department of Physical Education occupied the Sport Palace, and the national swim team was turned away from the Olympic pool, with the explanation that it was only for school use.<sup>133</sup> The cycling federation refused to practice until the government's plan for the facilities was changed.<sup>134</sup> After additional discussion between President Arévalo and sport leaders, it was decided that the CDAG would control the installations, and on March 22, the CDAG and CNO were allowed to move their offices into the Sport Palace.<sup>135</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The Central American and Caribbean Games of 1950 in Guatemala City were the sixth in the series of athletic festivals begun in Mexico in 1926 -- the oldest such event recognized by the IOC in the Western Hemisphere. Modern sport in Guatemala dated back to the 1890s although its development could not compare in magnitude and quality with sport in Mexico and Cuba, and it had never had governmental support at the level existing in some countries of the region. After the 1944 revolution, social improvements (e.g., in working conditions and pay, education, and health services) became the chief objectives of Guatemala's government, and important reforms were accomplished, first by a revolutionary junta and then under the presidency of Juan Jose Arévalo. The new government gave autonomy to sport with the formation of the Autonomous Sport Confederation (CDAG), and then undertook the gigantic task of constructing a sport complex like none other existing in the region, for the purpose of hosting the VIth Central American and Caribbean Games in 1950. Such great national effort and expense, in a society where education and health care were woefully underdeveloped, were justified publicly by the

expression that sport was “of social utility” and thus, according to the new constitution, deserving of national support. Also the idea was advanced that the promotion of sport activity by the construction of facilities and stimulation of broader athletic participation was as much a health measure as the construction of hospitals. President Arévalo, as a philosopher and educator, must have thought of the social values of sport, and likely brought back to Guatemala ideas of the importance of sport from his many years of residence in Argentina, the sporting capital of Latin America. In his early decisions to support the 1950 Games, he was probably encouraged by sports enthusiasts among his colleagues, such as Jacobo Arbenz, Jorge Toriello, Carlos Aldana Sandoval, Raúl Osegueda, and Mario Méndez Montenegro. The Games could have been predicted to be a powerful force for good public relations in the region and a rallying point for all sectors of Guatemalan society. They represented a radical break with the past (with Ubico’s dictatorship) and a point of pride for Guatemalans in their country and its government. Also President Arévalo had advocated Central American union, and it is possible that he saw the Games as a vehicle to help further that ideal.<sup>136</sup>

Probably the most important motivations for Guatemala to hold the 1950 Games and to build the Olympic City were the following: (1) The new constructions and the event itself were viewed as spectacular vehicles for building national pride and especially, pride in the revolutionary government, (2) The nations of the region and the more distant international community (both including many governments which were not pleased with Guatemalan political developments) would be shown what democratic, social reform government in Guatemala could do in terms of material accomplishments and also shown that the Guatemalan people were happy with their new freedoms and benefits, (3) Public support of sport and hosting of the Games were to be seen as another break with governments of the past, when sport had received little national support and Guatemala had not met the expectations of other nations of the region by hosting the Games at an earlier time. In his report to the Congress for 1946, President Arévalo described the awarding of the 1950 Games to Guatemala as testimony of the country’s good standing among its neighbors of the region.<sup>137</sup>

Perhaps the greatest outcomes of the 1950 Games were (1) the great work of urbanization in the center of the city, that converted an unsightly canyon containing an open sewer and a collection of squatters’ shacks into the impressive Olympic City, and (2) the boost the festival gave to Guatemalan sport.<sup>138</sup> New regional sport organizations were founded at the VIth Central American and Caribbean Games, and new series of regional competitions in basketball and track and field were planned. Although several unfortunate incidents involving athletes and spectators (and perhaps the nation’s lower position in the final standings than what had been hoped) detracted from the perfect achievement of all the objectives of the Guatemalan government and sport establishment, the construction of magnificent new sport installations and the successful staging of the games were important and worthy achievements.<sup>139</sup> The stadium and other sport structures remain as monuments to the presidency of Juan José Arévalo.<sup>140</sup>

On March 15, 1951, Colonel Jacobo Arbenz became the second president to lead Guatemala’s social/labor reform movement.<sup>141</sup> Advances in sport initiated under the Arévalo government continued. The great attention and support given to Guatemalan

national sport as host of the 1950 festival led to greater involvement of Guatemalan athletes internationally, including participation in the inaugural Central American basketball championships, held in Honduras in 1951, the initial Pan American Games in Buenos Aires in 1951, and Guatemala's first representation in the world Olympics, at the 1952 Games of Helsinki.<sup>142</sup> Also, although Guatemalan runners had entered the Boston Marathon since 1947, in 1952 Guatemalans finished first, third, and twenty-seventh in the race, a remarkable feat for such a small country and one completely lacking international recognition in sport. Guatemala's sport leaders wanted to continue using their new facilities for important international events. They failed in their requests to host the VIIIth Central American and Caribbean Games (1954) and the 2nd Pan American Games (1955), but in 1988 they were finally successful in being awarded the XVIth Central American and Caribbean Games (1990) after Colombia withdrew as the intended host. However, Guatemalan president Vinicio Cerezo decided in 1989 against funding the event, and Mexico, with its superior facilities and sport organization stepped in to save the Games. Guatemala did become a regional leader in a new international sport festival, the Central American Games. These Games involve only the six countries of the isthmus (now seven, including Belize since the 1990 games in Honduras) and were held for the first and third times (1973 and 1986) in Guatemala. Guatemala also hosted the VIth Central American and Caribbean University Games in 1990.<sup>143</sup>

The unusual period of democratic government in Guatemala during the years 1944-1954 was also a unique period in terms of sport-related activity. Today, Guatemalans look back on that decade as their Golden Age of sport.<sup>144</sup>

## Notes

1. The original version of this article was presented at the XXI North American Society for Sport History Conference, Albuquerque, NM, May 31, 1993, with the title, "Guatemalan Olympics: The Central American and Caribbean Games of 1950." Field work in Guatemala during 1990-93 was supported in part by grants from Southeastern Louisiana University. Appreciation is expressed to Dr. Joseph Arbena of Clemson University, who originally suggested this topic of study; to Lic. Rigoberto Bran Azmitia of the Hemeroteca Nacional de Guatemala, and personnel of the Brañas Library and the Guatemalan National Olympic Committee, Guatemala City, for their aid in securing resource materials; and to the University of Illinois Archives for supplying documents from the Avery Brundage Collection. All of the translations from Spanish are the author's,

2. R.F. Nyrop (ed.), *Guatemala: A Country Study* (2nd ed.), Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government, 1983, pp. 17-22.

3. Peter Calvert, *Guatemala: A Nation in Turmoil*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985, pp. 73-76; Alan LeBaron, "Impaired Democracy in Guatemala, 1944-1951," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Univ. of Florida, 1988, pp. 1-33; Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984 (orig. pub. in 1982), pp. 25-42; R.F. Nyrop, op. cit., pp. 21-23.

4. Ibid., pp. 23-24.

5. *Diario de Centro América*, (hereafter cited as DCA), February 23, 1950.
6. *El Imparcial*, (hereafter cited as *Imp.*), Dec. 11, 15, 1948; H.D. Nelson (ed.), *Costa Rica: A Country Study* (2nd ed.), Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government, 1983, pp. 43-50; H. Herring, *A History of Latin America* (2nd ed.), New York: Knopf, 1961, p. 489.
7. *Imp.*, September 27, 1949.
8. *Ibid.*, November 10, 1949; and February 3, 1950.
9. *Ibid.*, November 21, 25, 1949.
10. *Ibid.*, January 4, 1950.
11. *Ibid.*, January 5, 1950. In 1950 a commission of the Organization of American States visited Guatemala (after investigating Cuba, Dominican Republic, and Haiti) and cleared the nation of all charges of harboring subversive forces or planning aggression against other countries (*Ibid.*, February 10, 1950; and March 20-21, 1950).
12. *Ibid.*, December 14, 1949.
13. Arévalo's government was attacked in U.S. newspapers, including the *Chicago Tribune* and *New York Herald Tribune*, and magazines (e.g., see Leigh White, "Red Threat on our Tropic Frontier," *Saturday Evening Post*, Vol. 223, No. 18, Oct. 28, 1950, pp. 24-25, 146, 148-49; and J.P. McEvoy, "Trouble in our Backyard," *Reader's Digest*, Vol. 57, No. 340, August, 1950, pp. 7-11), and by congressmen such as Henry Cabot Lodge and John McCormack (from United Fruit's home state of Massachusetts), Mike Mansfield, and Claude Pepper (*Istmania*, Vol. 1, No. 6, March 3, 1950, pp. 7-9; LeBaron, op. cit., pp. 236-37; Schlesinger, op. cit., p. 72). In 1950 the *Herald Tribune* ran a series of front page articles about Guatemala by Fitzhugh Turner under the headline, "Communism in the Caribbean" (Ellis Ogle [pseud.], "Communism in the Caribbean?" *The Nation*, Vol. 170, No. 11, March 18, 1950 pp. 246-247; *Imp.*, February 14, 1950).
14. DCA, Sección Oficial, Tomo XLIII, Núm. 31, April 9, 1945, p. 248; *Imp.*, November 30, 1948; Informe del ciudadano Presidente de la República, doctor Juan José Arévalo al Congreso Nacional en la inauguración de su primer período de sesiones ordinarias del año de 1950, Guatemala: Tipografía Nacional, March 1, 1950, p. 21.
15. Nyrop, op. cit., p. 24.
16. DCA, January 16, 18, 1950.
17. To this day, and even after Belize (present name in its English spelling) received its independence from Britain in 1981, the area is still claimed by Guatemala and appears on Guatemalan maps as part of its national territory. Guatemala's position was weakened in 1991, when Guatemalan president Jorge Serrano (recently living in exile in Panama) gave diplomatic recognition to Belize.
18. After gaining independence from Spain in 1821 the Central American region was divided into the five republics of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, plus a northernmost portion which became the Mexican state of Chiapas. Panama remained part of Colombia until its separation into an independent nation in 1903.

19. Richard McGehee, "The Origins of Olympism in Mexico: The Central American Games of 1926," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1993, pp. 313-332.

20. Ibid. In 1926 modern sport had been developing in Guatemala for only a little over thirty years, and participation was still largely restricted to socially elite young men who were active in sport/social clubs. Guatemala had held an international sport festival in 1921, but only Mexico and Cuba had participated in the world Olympics -- Mexico for the first time in Paris in 1924. See Richard McGehee, "The Rise of Modern Sport in Guatemala and the First Central American Games," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1992, pp. 132-140; and Richard McGehee, "Sports and Recreational Activities in Guatemala and Mexico, Late 1800s to 1926," *Studies in Latin American Popular Culture*, forthcoming.

21. *Imp.*, December 23, 1946. Alejandro Aguilar Reyes [pseud., Fray Nano] (*México en los IV Juegos Deportivos Centroamericanos y del Caribe*, México, D.F.: La Afición, 1938, p. 73) said Ubico did not let his country's athletes participate in Panama because he thought some Panamanian government officials were his enemies. Federico Rölz Bennett explained that it was because Ubico feared the Guatemalan athletes "might contract a disease -- called democracy" (interview with the author, August 3, 1993).

22. In 1926 less than 300 young men competed in seven events over a period of twenty days. For the second games in Havana nine nations of Middle America participated in nine sports, and the number of participants more than doubled that of the 1926 festival. In San Salvador nine countries competed in fourteen sports, and women made their first appearance as official competitors (in basketball, swimming, diving, tennis, and volleyball). In Panama ten nations, including Colombia and Venezuela for the first time, contested seventeen sports. For the Vth Games in Colombia in 1946, there were thirteen nations (Trinidad, Curaçao and Dominican Republic participating for the first time) and eighteen sports. See Abraham Ferreiro Toledano, *Centroamérica y el Caribe a Través de sus Juegos*, Vol. 1, 1986.

23. *DCA*, Sección Oficial, Tomo XLV, Núm. 34, December 20, 1945, pp. 301-302 (Legislative Decree No. 211; December 7, 1945); Hugo Rolando López, "La Autonomía del Deporte Federado Guatemalteco," unpublished bachelor's law thesis, Universidad de San Carlos de Guatemala, 1987, p. 22.

24. Ubico had controlled sport in the style of Hitler, whom he admired, by a department established in 1935 in the Ministry of Public Education, and an attempt to form an independent confederation in 1938 had failed (*El Liberal Progresista* (Guatemala), October 12, 1938).

25. Antonio Guzmán, *Historial del Fútbol Nacional*, Guatemala: Tip. Nac, 1952, p. 162.

26. *DCA*, Sección Oficial, Tomo XLVI, Núm. 53, May 20, 1946, pp. 550-551 (Presidential approval of its statutes and recognition of the legal status of CDAG, April 23, 1946). This document covered the governance and scope of operations of the Confederation, including establishment of administrative units in the provinces. It pointed out that the nation's constitution declares that sport and physical culture are of social utility, and thus, the CDAG should be supported economically and morally by the State.

27. This first National Olympic Committee was named by the Confederation only eight months before the beginning of the Central American and Caribbean Games of

1946, and the six members were assigned “one room of ten square meters, a tenth-hand desk, a typewriter that scratched the paper in agony over the miserable state of our sport, and in the ceiling, a single twenty-five-watt light bulb . . . the typist had to learn to write in semi-darkness” (Cristóbal Humberto Ibarra, “V Juegos Deportivos en Colombia,” *Istmania*, Vol. 1, No. 4, February 17, 1950, pp. 33-35).

28. *Imp.*, December 7, 1946. The government provided 10,000 quetzales for expenses and military aircraft for transportation of the Guatemalan delegation (*Anuario Deportivo Continental*, Guatemala, 1950, p. 21).

29. *Imp.*, December 23, 1946; *VI JDCAyC Punteo, 1950* (pamphlet published by the Organizing Committee of the Games; n.p.); Ibarra, op. cit. Various sources reported 2, 7, and 17 ties with Venezuela in the voting before Guatemala won.

30. *DCA*, January 2, 1948. Some federations were still being formed shortly before the 1950 Games. For example, the volleyball federation was not established until August of 1949 (*Imp.*, August 22, 1949).

31. Program for the ceremony of inauguration of the ACD Press Center, December 5, 1987. The APG threatened to boycott the 1948 soccer tournament because the soccer federation refused to allow journalists free access to the games. The federation later relented and guaranteed the fifty-one APG members free entrance to the tournament and to future soccer games (*Imp.*, February 23 and March 1, 1948).

32. Historia del Deporte Guatemalteco (unpublished manuscript in the Max Tott Sport Section of the Hemeroteca National, Guatemala City), p. 3; Guzmán, op. cit., pp. 114-115; Celso Alvarez Rosales, *Vivencias de un Cronista Deportivo*, Guatemala: Imprenta Apolo, 1992, p. 9.

33. *Imp.*, February 26, March 1, 2, 1948.

34. *DCA*, Sección Oficial, Tomo XLIII, Núm. 13, March 15, 1945, p. 107.

35. *Imp.*, December 10, 1946. It was thought that with time the stadium would pay for itself. Two million quetzales had just been added to the year's budget from income provided by national plantations (principally plantations confiscated from German owners as a result of World War II).

36. *Anuario Deportivo Continental*, pp. 23-24; *DCA*, Sección Oficial, Tomo XLIX, Núm. 73, June 19, 1947, pp. 1045-1046. These were decretos legislativos 382 and 400. The tax decree was later modified by legislative decree 435 of October, 1947 (*Recopilación de las leyes de la República de Guatemala 1947-1948*, Tomo LXVI, Guatemala: Tipografía Nacional, 1957, pp. 119- 120).

37. *La Hora Dominical*, March 5, 1950.

38. *La Hora* of May 30, 1947 carried a letter from two of the residents of the area, protesting the removal of over 100 families, who with great difficulty had managed to build their homes there. The families that were displaced were given lots in another part of the city, a cash award, and the materials from their dismantled house (*Imp.*, May 28, 1948).

39. *DCA*, January 18, 1949.

40. *Imp.*, December 23, 1946.

41. For example, the velodrome was not begun until late in 1949 and was finished around two weeks before the opening ceremony (*Boletín del CNO*, No. 51,

September, 1949, p. 4; *Imp.*, February 17, 1950). Until then the Guatemalan cyclists had to confine their training to road work, and none had ever ridden in (or probably even seen) a velodrome before.

42. All of these structures were built during the Arévalo presidency. They represent the kinds of goals held to be important by the revolutionary reform movement in this stage of its development. A *Diario de Centro América* editorial of January 10, 1950, claimed that the sport installations would increase Guatemala's prestige outside the country and would gain recognition by citizens and foreigners of the revolutionary government's material constructive capability.

43. Enrique Flamenco (ed.), *Album Olímpico de los VI Juegos*, (n.d., n.p.). Elected to the CNO were Roberto Barrios Peña, José Guirola, Federico Rölz Bennett, Jorge Santano de Mata, Carlos Girón Cerna, Efraín Molina Flores, Salvador Abularach, Santos Carrera, and Max Tott. The first four named constituted the Organizing Committee, with Barrios Peña serving as president of both committees.

44. *Imp.*, September 23, 1948.

45. *Ibid.*, September 14, 16-18, 20-25, 27, 1948. The soccer federation, backed by the CDAG president, complained that the CNO failed to provide funding for some of their activities and built a practice track on their playing fields in the Campo de Marte. Barrios Peña defended himself ("there can't be any politics in sport because its statutes prohibit it") and attacked the old Olympic Committee (referring to them as "ex-members" of the CNO) in the press (*Ibid.*, September 17-18, 1948). He threatened that their behavior was damaging preparations for the 1950 Games and could even cause Guatemala to be replaced as host of the festival. One suspects that the battle over control of sport was related both to its political value and to the large (and unaccustomed) amount of money being managed by the CNO, certainly a source of envy and temptation.

46. *Ibid.*, September 24, 1948.

47. *Nuestro Diario* (Guatemala), December 22, 27, 1948; Boletín del CNO, No. 27, April, 1949, p. 4. Members of the commission were José Rölz Bennett (older brother of Federico), Joaquín Barrios Prieto, and Augusto Putzeys.

48. Federico Rölz Bennett, interview with the author, August 3, 1993. Rölz recalled that President Arévalo had personally called and asked him to take the presidency of the Organizing Committee and that he always had access to Arévalo, who also appointed Rölz as Guatemalan representative to the United Nations. Rölz used his travel to United Nations headquarters to contact Avery Brundage, Dan Ferris of the AAU, Richard Patterson (who was soon to be U.S. ambassador in Guatemala), and others to request their support for the 1950 "Olympics." He saw his participation in the Organizing Committee as service to Guatemala, President Arévalo, and national sport, and he resigned when pressures increased to employ the 1950 festival for advancement of political objectives, particularly in relation to the coming presidential elections.

49. *DCA*, January 19, 1950.

50. *Imp.*, December 12, 1948; Boletín del CNO, No. 11, December, 1948, pp. 2-3. Equestrian events were omitted from the official program approved by the Congress because they were supported only by Mexico and Guatemala. Chess and billiards were also rejected by the delegates. A few days after the close of the Congress, the first shipment of horses that had been bought by the Guatemalan CNO (at a cost of 21,000 quetzales) arrived by air from the U.S. (*Imp.*, December 22, 1948) and with

Cuba's entry as the third competitor in the event, it became possible to hold equestrian competition during the 1950 festival.

51. *DCA*, January 19, 1950. Hunter's change of status may have been related to his criticism of members of the Guatemalan Olympic Committee, although a public explanation was given that it was because he did not speak Spanish.

52. *Punteo*, op. cit.; publicity bulletins of the CNO. Guatemala's foreign coaches included an Argentinean for soccer, Mexicans for tennis and equestrian events, a German for dressage, Cubans for baseball and gymnastics, Belgian for cycling (he was also conditioning coach and chief of the masseurs), Frenchman for fencing, and Americans for basketball, boxing and wrestling, weight lifting, golf, shooting, swimming/diving/water polo, and track and field. Bill Miller, the men's basketball coach (and his wife, Margaret, who coached the women's team), and Mike Ryan, the track coach, were contracted early in 1948 (*DCA*, January 10, 1948) but a couple of the foreign coaches did not arrive until the month before competition began. Other nations also hired foreign coaches (e.g., Honduras had a Brazilian soccer coach and El Salvador, an Argentinean for soccer and Mexican for basketball) and held practice matches with some of their future international opponents (*Anuario Deportivo Continental*, pp. 34-35; *Imp.*, October 18, 1949).

53. *Imp.*, July 13, 15-16, 1949.

54. *Ibid.*, December 3, 1949.

55. *Ibid.*, October 15, 1949; December 5, 9, 1949; and February 11, 1950.

56. *Ibid.*, October 24, 1949.

57. *Ibid.*, January 30, 1950. Miguel Angel Cospín, head of the sports department of *El Imparcial*, especially criticized the travel of CNO and Organizing Committee officers and wrote of the "danza de los millones olímpicos" [dance of the Olympic millions] (Miguel Angel Cospín, *Nuestro Fútbol en su Epoca de Oro*, Guatemala: Union Tipográfica, 1965).

58. Near the end of the 1950 festival, the National Congress decided to investigate the CNO's expenditures, because "the competition results were not satisfactory and did not correspond to the amount of money spent" (*Imp.*, March 7, 1950).

59. *Ibid.*, October 29, 1949. They lost pay not only for the time missed, but also their "seventh day salary."

60. *Ibid.*, January 25, 1950. Mario Monteforte Toledo, president of the National Congress and member of the fencing team, was subject to the same training regime as the other athletes. However, he was given permission to leave the Normal School to preside over the Congress on days when it was in session (*Ibid.*, February 14, 1950).

61. *DCA*, January 20, 1950, stated that around 70 radio stations had been presenting a weekly broadcast related to the games for the last year. Programs in Guatemala included topics such as, "Recent Activities of the CNO," "Origins of Soccer," "Life of Pierre Coubertin," "History of the Olympic Games," and "A Call to the Youth of Guatemala" (*Boletín del CNO*, No. 4, October, 1948, p. 2).

62. *Ibid.*, No. 3, October, 1948, p. 4. Sixty-four aspirants enrolled in the contest (thirty-four wanted to be soccer announcers). Only eleven were currently working in radio or press jobs.

63. *Imp.*, August 1, 1949.

64. *Ibid.*, September 20, 1949.

65. Ronald Schneider, *Communism in Guatemala: 1944-1954*, New York: Octagon Books, 1979, pp. 30-31. (Originally published in 1958 by Praeger: NY.)

66. Although the firing of Aguilar was related to the death of Arana and, probably, his criticism of the government's lack of action in bringing the killers to justice, his position already must have been precarious at that moment, as he had signed a petition emitted by the National Association of Engineers on July 16 calling for the resignation of his immediate superior, Minister of Communications and Public Works Carlos Aldana Sandoval (*La Hora*, July 16, 18, 1949). In 1985 Aguilar privately published a book entitled, *La Ciudad Olímpica en la Capital de la República de Guatemala*, which contains material related to the construction of the sport complex and to the games (mainly articles from newspapers), and includes many photographs. Although he was not allowed to complete the stadium he had begun, Aguilar did participate in the VIth Games, as member of the Guatemalan equestrian team which won a silver medal.

67. *DCA*, January 10, 1950. Aguilar claimed that he had nearly completed the construction at an expense of only 1,200,000 quetzales and that Martínez spent an additional 1,700,000 quetzales on the project in the six months since he had been made superintendent (*Imp.*, February 27, 1950). Martínez was expelled from the Engineers' Association for accepting the position of stadium construction superintendent and criticizing the work of his predecessor (*Ibid.*, September 17, 1949). Martínez complained that Aguilar and the other engineers had taken all the building plans with them when they resigned.

68. *Ibid.*, October 27, 1949.

69. *Informe del ciudadano Presidente*, Guatemala: Tip. Nac., March 1, 1950, p. 61.

70. *Imp.*, January 2, 12, and February 13, 1950. Two weeks before the opening ceremony a bakers' strike left Guatemala City without bread, and the cement plant was closed by a strike. During the last week, work continued during the nights using the stadium lights and huge lamps, to allow completion of the Olympic City.

71. Hunter to Brundage, February 10, August 15, 29, September 20, 27, 1949, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Archives, Avery Brundage Collection (hereafter cited as ABC). Hunter did not speak Spanish (this was an explanation that was given for why he was later replaced as Technical Director of the VIth Games), and he did not seem to understand some of the cultural differences of Latin Americans or the political situation existing in Guatemala. For example, referring to the firing of stadium superintendent Aguilar, he wrote on August 29, 1949: "A short time ago the head engineer was fired on some political deal that I know nothing about" (*Ibid.*).

72. Edstrøm to Brundage, September 15, 1949, ABC.

73. Mayer to Edstrøm, September 2, 1949, ABC; Edstrøm to Ydígoras Fuentes, September 15, 1949, ABC. In addition to Brundage, the commission included Moenck (Cuba), Benavides (Peru), Gómez (Mexico) and Ydígoras Fuentes (Guatemala). Brundage and Edstrøm sent excerpts of Hunter's accusatory letters to General Ydígoras Fuentes in London, and Edstrøm insisted that Ydígoras return home to "straighten out things" and "establish order" in his country (Edstrøm to Ydígoras, September 6, 10, 1949, ABC; Ydígoras to Edstrøm, September 12, 1949, ABC). None of the IOC leadership seemed to realize what Ydígoras Fuentes' relationship was with his home country. As Guatemala's ambassador in Britain, he

was more or less in exile, and as it was considered probable that he would enter the 1950 presidential race, competing for votes with the government's candidate, Arbenz, he would not even have been given permission to return to Guatemala. It is unlikely that Brundage's extreme anti-communist sentiments played any role in his relationship with the VIth CA&C Games, but in his personal papers there is a clipping of one of Fitzhugh Turner's *New York Herald Tribune* articles on "Communism in the Caribbean?" (ABC; see note 13) and General Ydígoras eventually became known as an arch fighter against communism.

74. *Ibid.*, November 26, 1949. Some of the language in the letter could be viewed as arrogant, if not insulting to the Guatemalans. The newspapers softened this effect by bold-facing the laudatory sections. Federico Rölz Bennett believes the IOC commission's choice of the newspapers as a forum for the report of their findings was intended to pressure the Guatemalans into straightening out their differences and making the necessary efforts to complete preparations for the Games, by publicly threatening that approval of the IOC could still be withheld if sufficient progress were not made (Federico Rölz Bennett, interview with author, August 10, 1993).

75. *Imp.*, December 5, 1949.

76. *Ibid.*, November 4, 1949; and February 8, 13, 1950.

77. Although lacking diplomatic relations with Guatemala, Nicaragua had strong reasons to send a delegation to the 1950 Games. They wanted to renew their traditional baseball supremacy, having lost to Guatemala in the Amateur World Series in 1948, but more important, they needed to attend a congress which would be held during the VIth Games and would consider whether FIBA or a proposed Inter American baseball federation should control the sport internationally in the future. Nicaragua had been designated as the site of the world amateur baseball championship to be held in November of 1950, and if the proposed new federation were accepted, they would have to be reaffirmed as host (*Imp.*, January 14, 1950). Toward the end of 1949 the president and treasurer of the Organizing Committee visited most countries of the CA&C circuit to officially invite their participation, and in January of 1950 the secretary of the Committee left to visit Costa Rica, Haiti, Dominican Republic and Venezuela to try to smooth out any problems the latter three countries might have with regards to attendance at the VIth Games (*Ibid.*, December 22, 1949; *DCA*, January 19, 1950). British Honduras (Belize) was not an official member of the CA&C circuit in 1950, and thus not eligible to participate. Nevertheless, in his annual message to the Congress for 1951, Arévalo stated that his government "had rejected the attempt of Belize to send an athletic delegation under the British flag" (*Informe del ciudadano Presidente*, Guatemala: Tip. Nac., March 1, 1951, pp. 29-30).

78. *DCA*, February 23, 1950. Martínez was also honored with a supper, attended by Arévalo (*Ibid.*, February 24, 1950).

79. *Ibid.*, February 23, 1950; *Imp.*, February 23, 1950.

80. *Nuestro Diario*, February 23, 1950.

81. *Idice de las Principales Obras Materiales Realizadas en Cuatro Años de Gobierno del Doctor Arévalo*, Guatemala: Tipografía Nacional, 1949, p. 10.

82. *DCA*, January 25, 1950. Articles and editorials related to the Games in the independent and conservative *La Hora* and *El Imparcial* frequently contrasted sharply with those in *Diario de Centro América*, and other government newspapers. *El Imparcial* was critical of the government on several points, especially taking sides

over the question of the fired stadium superintendent and his replacement. They even harped about the name of the stadium. The government wanted to call it “Stadium of the Revolution,” whereas *El Imparcial* liked “National Stadium” (*Imp.*, January 26, 1950).

83. Ogle, op. cit., p. 247.

84. *Imp.*, December 19, 1949.

85. “State Dept’s Dispute with Guatemala,” *The Nation*, Vol. 170, No. 16, April 22, 1950, pp. 358-59; “Musical Disharmony: Slur on U.S. at Central American Olympic Games, Guatemala City,” *Senior Scholastic*, Vol. 56, March 8, 1950, p. 8; “Guatemala: Pulling Uncle’s Whiskers,” *Newsweek*, Vol. 35, No. 11, March 13, 1950, p. 45.

86. *Ibid.*

87. *DCA*, February 27, 1950; *Imp.*, February 27, 1950. Patterson made no reference to the incident when he spoke with Gonzalez Arévalo after the ceremony, and no protest was delivered. About a month later, Ambassador Patterson was quietly removed from Guatemala, first being asked by the Department of State to return to Washington for consultations, and then given medical leave. A verbal request for his recall by the Guatemalan government, citing his interference with their internal affairs, was refused by the State Department (Samuel Inman, *A New Day in Guatemala*, Wilton CT: Worldover Press, pp. 44-46), but Patterson did not return to Guatemala, and he was not replaced during Arévalo’s presidency. *Reader’s Digest* (McEvoy, op. cit.) and *Saturday Evening Post* (Leigh White, op. cit.) sensationalized Patterson’s withdrawal as being the result of threats on his life in Guatemala.

88. *Newsweek*, op. cit.

89. *La Hora Dominical*, March 12, 1950. Today, Puerto Rico has its own flag and its official anthem, La Borinqueña.

90. *Imp.*, November 4, 1949; *Informe del Ciudadano Presidente*, March 1, 1949, p. 5.

91. *Imp.*, February 27, 1950.

92. *La Hora Dominical*, March 5, 1950.

93. *Imp.*, February 25, 1950

94. See Ferreiro, op. cit., pp. 89, 138, 176.

95. *Imp.*, February 27, 1950.

96. *Ibid.*

97. *Ibid.*, February 21-22, 28, and March 17, 1950.

98. *Ibid.*, January 9, 1950; *DCA*, February 24, 1950.

99. Roberto Cueto, Guatemala’s Cuban softball coach, had coached the baseball team until late in 1949. In July of 1949 Guatemala’s new softball federation held its first meeting and planned a national championship to select the team for the VIth Games (*Imp.*, July 13, 1949).

100. *Boletín del CNO*, No. 11, December, 1948, p. 2, and No. 34, May, 1949, p. 4. Also proposed was a chess game, “live” or a replay of a famous match of some world champion, to be played on a giant board marked on the playing field of the stadium, with boys and girls as the pieces (*Diario de la Mañana* (Guatemala), December 21, 1949).
101. *Imp.*, February 28 and March 1-3, 1950. Costa Rica’s matches in other sports were postponed until a decision was made by the soccer team. Afterwards, the rest of the delegation decided to continue in the competition (*Ibid.*, March 1, 1950).
102. *Ibid.*, March 9-10, 13, 1950.
103. *Ibid.*, February 25, 1950.
104. In the 1948 London Olympics McKenley had won a second place in 400 meters and La Beach, third place in 100 meters. In the 1952 Olympics McKenley was given second place in an extremely close photo finish 100 meter race and was part of the winning Jamaican 4X400 team that set a new world record.
105. Enrique Montesinos and Sigfredo Barros, *Centroamericanos y del Caribe: Los Más Antiguos Juegos Deportivos Regionales del Mundo*, Havana: Editorial Científico-Técnica, 1984, p. 45.
106. Guzmán, *op. cit.*, p. 199. Other sources say the game lasted 170 minutes (e.g., *Imp.*, March 8, 1950).
107. *La Hora Dominical*, March 12, 1950.
108. *Imp.*, March 11, 1950. *La Hora Dominical* (March 12, 1950) criticized the general for “taking advantage of Guatemalan hospitality and an enthusiastic audience of sport fans, to launch a speech of publicity and adulation for Argentinean president Juan Domingo Perón.”
109. *Imp.*, March 14, 1950; Guzmán, *op. cit.*, p. 201.
110. *Imp.*, March 9, 1950. The Colombian delegation announced that they would not participate in the VIIIth Games in Panama, if the games were to coincide with the celebration of Panama’s fiftieth anniversary of independence from Colombia (*Ibid.*, March 13, 1950). At the Assembly of Delegates, Guatemala proposed the establishment of a committee to take permanent responsibility for the Central American and Caribbean Games, but this question was tabled for lack of a quorum, to be taken up at the next Assembly (*Ibid.*, March 10, 13, 1950). Problems in Panama prevented their holding the VIIth Games, and Mexico stepped in with only a year for preparation and hosted the festival in 1954 (Montesinos and Barros, *op. cit.*, p. 50).
111. *Imp.*, March 8-9, 11, 13, 18, 1950. The first Central American and Caribbean track and field championship was planned for Mexico in 1951. Guatemalans who had participated in the Vth CA&C Games in Colombia realized that the Central American countries were well below the level of basketball powers such as Mexico, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, so they formed a group encompassing only their region and held their first championship in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, later in 1950 (*Souvenir*, September, 1955, p. 4, 7).
112. *DCA*, February 28, 1950.
113. *Imp.*, February 27, 1950.

114. *Ibid.*, February 2, 10, 16, 1950.

115. Eduardo Rodriguez (ed.), *Ritmo Olímpico*, (n.d., n.p.). The contest for the Poema Olímpico [Olympic poem] was sponsored by the artistic group “Saker-Ti.” The panel of judges, including future Nobel laureate, Miguel Angel Asturias, found no entry merited the prize offered by the Ministry of Public Education (*Nuestro Diario*, March 8, 1950).

116. *Imp.*, February 25, 1950.

117. *DCA*, January 17, 1950.

118. *Ritmo Olímpico*, op. cit.; *Punteo*, op. cit. The Ministry of Public Education also sponsored an exposition of textbooks in the National Palace.

119. *Imp.*, February 25 and March 6, 1950.

120. *Nuestro Diario*, February 23, 1950.

121. *Imp.*, February 18, 1950.

122. *Ibid.*, March 1, 1950.

123. *Album Olímpico*, op. cit.; *Imp.*, February 21, 1950. The general’s name was spelled variously as Ydígoras or Idígoras. Interestingly, General Ydígoras had been replaced in 1944 as (U)bito’s Director of Highways by the future stadium superintendent, Juan de Dios Aguilar (Aguilar, op. cit., p. 10).

124. *Imp.*, February 24, 1950. Later in 1950 General Ydígoras did become a candidate in the presidential election, which was won by Arbenz. Although he was hounded out of this campaign and later went into exile in El Salvador, Ydígoras remained active in politics, and in 1958, in a somewhat irregular manner, he became president of the Republic (Nyrop, op. cit., p. 30).

125. *Imp.*, March 14, 1950. As he himself could be considered to be one of the chief pioneers of Central American sport, presidential hopeful Ydígoras’ oratory seemed to be aimed at attracting voter support. The writer of Saetas used the scene to poke fun at Guatemalan women, Guatemalan men, and the government.

126. *Ibid.*, March 17, 1950.

127. *Ibid.*, March 15-18, 21, 1950.

128. *Ibid.*, March 14, 1950; Ferreiro Toledano, op. cit., p. 198.

129. *Punteo* (op. cit.) gives these figures. Other numbers were published in newspapers; e.g., *El Imparcial* (March 7, 1950) reported that the Organizing Committee had received around Q 3,500,000.

130. *Ibid.*, March 17, 1950. This figure was later changed to Q 168,142 (*Ibid.*, March 23, 1950). The Immigration Department estimated the number of visitors to the capital for the games, including foreigners and Guatemalans from outside the city, to be around 15,000. The Bank of Guatemala estimated that the visitors would leave a total of around Q 1,500,000 in the country (*Ibid.*, March 3, 1950).

131. *Ibid.*, March 8, 15, 1951.

132. *Ibid.*, February 27, 1950; and March 9-10, 18, 1950. The government's plan was for the coordinating committee to distribute 75% of funds received to the CDAG and 25% to the CNO and for their own use. After all debts were retired, 50% of the revenues from the sport facilities were to be used for building schools, 40% for the Department of Physical Education of the Ministry of Public Education, and 10% for the CDAG.

133. *Diario de la Mañana*, March 17, 1950.

134. *Ibid.* March 18, 1950.

135. *Imp.*, March 22, 1950. A couple of days later the Physical Educators held a march to protest CDAG's exclusive control of the Olympic facilities (*Ibid.*, March 24, 1950).

136. A 1932 Arévalo essay discussed Plato's ideas on the role of gymnastics (physical activity) in the education of children ("La Pedagogía Platónica," in *Juan José Arévalo, Escritos Pedagógicos y Filosóficos*, Guatemala: Tipografía Nacional, 1945, pp. 265-289). Arévalo's views on Central American union appeared in his 1939 essay, "Cultura y Posibilidades de Cultura en la América Central," *Juan José Arévalo, Escritos Políticos*, Guatemala: Tipografía Nacional, 1945, pp. 57- 69; and in his 1947 message to the Guatemalan Congress, referring to an agreement with El Salvador removing the requirement of passports between the two countries: "The aspirations of the people of Guatemala to witness the reconstruction of the Republic of Central America as soon as possible have been furthered with the new steps my government has taken toward this goal" (*Informe del ciudadano Presidente*, March 1, 1947, pp. 5-6).

137. *Ibid.*, p. 30. Perhaps his feeling was not so different from that of the Soviet Communist Party, which called the decision to hold the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow convincing evidence of the "correctness of the foreign policy course of our nation" (*1980 Book of the Party Activist*, quoted in *Newsweek*, Vol. 95, No. 4, January 28, 1980, p. 23).

138. This is the opinion of Federico Rölz Bennett. (Rölz Bennett interview, August 3, 1993).

139. Not all Guatemalans praised the country's accomplishments. Jorge Toriello, the civilian member of the 1944 junta but later a political enemy of the Arévalo government, criticized "the division of social classes caused by the government's propaganda of hatred and slander" and proposed that potential visitors to the VIth Games had not come for fear that constitutional guarantees might be suspended during the festival, "such suspensions being the current practice of the government." Toriello deplored the "fantastic sums that had been spent on the games -- with more political than sporting objectives," and viewed the games and the publicity surrounding them, coming in Arévalo's fifth (next to last) year, "as a kind of farewell something like a celebration of transfer of the presidency in the coming year" (*Imp.*, March 8, 1950). *La Hora Dominical* (March 19, 1950) continued its attacks, saying that economically the Games were a failure and that the CNO had not been able to pay its debts. In May the national Congress gave the CNO 90 days to turn in their accounts (*DCA*, May 6, 1950).

140. Most of the 1950 structures continue to be used for local and international competition. In 1987 ex-president Arévalo received the Order of the Association of Guatemalan Sportswriters (ACD) for his contributions to Guatemalan sport (*Prensa Libre*, March 24, 1987).

141. During Arbenz's administration, land reform went forward, labor organization increased, and there was increasing participation of communists in the government and national life. Supported by neighboring right-wing governments and the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States a small group of ex-Guatemalan military invaded the country in 1954 and with little resistance brought the revolutionary government of Guatemala to an end. Most of the reforms initiated during the previous ten years were repealed, and pre-1944 styles of government reappeared. Frustrated attempts to return the country to democracy led to guerrilla insurgency and terrorism, which was answered by government violence and terrorism. The country has experienced a sad history of nearly continuous war since that time (Schlesinger, op. cit.; Schneider, op. cit.; Calvert, op. cit.; Nyrop, op. cit.).

142. Thirty-nine Guatemalan athletes competed in seven sports in the first Pan American Games in February of 1951 (*DCA*, February 16, 1951), and the Guatemalan delegation for the Helsinki Olympics of 1952 consisted of 22 athletes in seven sports (from compilation by Patricia Meighan, Guatemalan CNO). Guatemala continued to participate in each Central American and Caribbean and Pan American Games competition, but after 1952 there was no further Guatemalan representation in the world Olympics until 1968. Their absence during three Olympiads may be attributed to problems in the sport leadership of the country, the costs involved, disillusionment with their experience in Helsinki, and poor prospects for a respectable showing in the Olympic arena.

143. See Richard McGehee, "Los Juegos de las Americas: Four Inter-American Multisport Competitions," *Sport in the Global Village*, Morgantown, West Virginia: Fitness Information Technology, Inc., 1994, pp. 377-387.

144. Patricia Meighan, Augusto Muñoz Urizar, and Fabio Cerdas Ramírez of the Guatemalan Olympic Committee, Carlos Pontaza Izepe, chief of the Sport Section, and Mario (Sammy) Monterroso Mirón, writer, *Prensa Libre* (currently Guatemala City's largest newspaper), and Dr. Jorge Ochaita, former official of Guatemalan delegations to CA&C, Pan American, and Olympic Games, conversations with author, July and August of 1993.