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OLIMPISMO

THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT IN THE MAKING
OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Edited by Antonio Sotomayor and Cesar R. Torres

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The Nationalist Movement and the Struggle for Freedom in Puerto Rico's Olympic Sport

ANTONIO SOTOMAYOR

to host prestigious sporting events and, in the cases of the 1954 Central American and Caribbean Games and the 1986 Men's Football World Cup, stepped in when the original hosts defaulted on their responsibilities. Mexico's eventual presence at the heart of the Olympic Movement meant that, despite its many critics both within and beyond the country, it not only gained the prize of hosting the world's most prestigious event, but added a significant building block in its attempt to construct a better image of the nation and its people.

"I think I united a nation . . . I just love where I come from," said Mónica Puig after winning Puerto Rico's first-ever Olympic gold medal at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Puig indeed had united the masses throughout the island as shopping centers, pharmacies, gas stations, hospitals, schools, churches, government offices, and even Senate offices paralyzed activities to watch the tennis matches.¹ Ranked thirty-fourth by the World Tennis Association, Puig beat the second-ranked and reigning Australian Champion Angelique Kerber after beating a two-time Wimbledon champion (Petra Kvitová) and a French Open champion (Garbiñe Muguruza) on her way to Olympic gold. Her #PicaPower war cry became the top global Twitter trend as celebrities including Ricky Martin, Lin-Manuel Miranda, and Yasiel Puig and tennis legends Chris Evert, Martina Navratilova, and Billie Jean King, among many more, sent congratulatory messages.² Alejandro García Padilla, then-governor of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, led the welcoming reception and massive popular parade, saying that August 13, 2016, had become a key date in the history of Puerto Rico because that day Puerto Rico's anthem had played at the Olympics and the "flag was hoisted at the highest flagpole."³

Despite this prominent and positive embrace of national identity, earlier in the year all three branches of the US government officially ratified Puerto Rican political subordination to the plenary powers of the US Congress. This left no doubt of Puerto Rican colonialism,⁴ while

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up-and-coming politicians called for independence or sovereignty.⁵ Calls for decolonization and/or independence have existed in Puerto Rico under both Spanish and US regimes since the nineteenth century.⁶ Under the United States, a new feature in Puerto Rico's struggle for self-determination and independence has been the power of sport, the Olympic Movement in particular. The Olympic Movement has given Puerto Ricans a powerful platform to foster national identity and nationalism, given that only sovereign nation-states can participate at the Olympic Games. For Latin Americans, in the discussion of the Olympic Movement Puerto Rico occupies a special place, because it is the only Latin American nation that does not have political sovereignty. Puerto Ricans, as Latin Americans/Caribbeans with US citizenship, have found their political and cultural intricacies intertwined in the Olympic Movement. For Puerto Ricans, the Olympic Movement has been a special platform to not only display their nationhood, but also to challenge colonialism and strive for national independence.

Explaining why Puerto Ricans have such strong nationalist feelings while not traditionally opting for independence is not easy. One point of view might be that Puerto Ricans have opted for an "intermediate nationalism" that allowed those who favor autonomy to satisfy nationalist feelings while maintaining close ties with the imperial metropolis.⁷ This seems to go in line with the idea that Puerto Ricans have nurtured cultural nationalism more than political nationalism.⁸ While political nationalists sought independence, cultural nationalists sought political autonomy that allowed for the strengthening of a national culture, without the need of independence from the metropolis. For the current study, the generic term "nationalists" encompasses those who believe in a Puerto Rican national identity, either for cultural or political purposes. Instead, the proper noun "Nationalists" refers to those who belonged or sympathized with Puerto Rico's Partido Nacionalista (PN). Lastly, independentistas are all of those nationalists and Nationalists who believe in and seek Puerto Rican independence.

As the president of Puerto Rico's PN, Pedro Albizu Campos spearheaded a radical and sometimes violent movement for Puerto Rican independence throughout the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. The Nationalists' relation to Olympic sport since 1930 was not as supportive as some might think. This was because Puerto Ricans actually represented the United States during the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s. Since then, a complicated

negotiation over colonialism, Olympic sport, and national identity began and endured in a process called colonial Olympism.⁹ As I show elsewhere, Puerto Rico's Olympic sport was adopted by the autonomist movement, rather than by independentistas, as a way to showcase cultural nationalism and autonomy and engage in international politics.¹⁰ An unanswered question, then, remained: How was Olympic sport viewed by Puerto Rican Nationalists and independentistas? To what extent, if at all, did the Nationalists and independentistas utilize Olympic sport in their struggle for freedom?

In this chapter, I show the different ways in which Puerto Rican Nationalists and independentistas viewed or utilized the Olympic Movement in their struggles for independence. I argue that when Puerto Rico entered the Olympic Movement representing the United States, the Nationalist leadership refrained from incorporating Puerto Rico's Olympic participation in their official arsenal for decolonization. On the contrary, during the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s Albizu Campos and other top-ranking nationalists viewed Puerto Rico's delegation as a US tool for Americanization and inherently anti-Puerto Rican. Yet, for others, especially patriotic athletes, the Olympic delegation constituted the best scenario to display and celebrate the nation. A turning point occurred in the late 1950s: in 1959 a new independentista coalition, the *Movimiento Pro Independencia* (MPI), was established by Juan Mari Bras. Under the MPI, sport and the Olympic delegation gradually became accepted by independence leaders as an expression of the nation. Recognizing the diplomatic and symbolic power of the Olympic Movement, many athletes and their followers viewed Puerto Rico's national Olympic delegation not only as the embodiment of the nation, but also as a vehicle in the fight for decolonization.

The chapter begins with an overview of how sport served to negotiate the terms of US imperialism and Americanization during the first decades of the twentieth century. Following this I will discuss the ideological tenets of the nationalists, including the PN. Next, I analyze how Puerto Rican Nationalists' view of the Olympic delegation changed with the establishment of the Commonwealth in 1952 and the rise of the MPI in 1959. The independentistas' use of Olympic sport in their struggle for independence reached a climax during the 1979 Pan-American Games in San Juan, when the pro-US statehood governor proposed the use of both the US and Puerto Rican flags throughout the tournament.

Sport, Americanization, and Nationalism

When the United States took possession of Puerto Rico in 1898 it embarked on an aggressive Americanization agenda that sought to transform Puerto Ricans' Spanish Caribbean traditions into Anglo-American ones. This transformation occurred under a colonial framework that stated that "Puerto Rico belonged to, but was not part of, the United States," and that the US Congress held "plenary powers" over the island.¹¹ The Foraker Act of 1900 established a civilian government that included a governor appointed by the US president and an executive council with legislative and judiciary powers (composed of six US-Americans and five Puerto Ricans), which was charged to carry out the Americanization project, and a locally elected House of Representatives.¹² Americanization included having English as the language of instruction in all schools, celebration of US patriots and historical figures, patriotic songs, holidays, and the US national anthem.¹³ Together, these were the symbols of US progress and the new culture locals were expected to make their own. Sport also arrived with this same purpose. Baseball, viewed under Spain as foreign and threatening, was now accepted and supported by US authorities and their loyal Puerto Rican allies.¹⁴ Other US sports made their way into Puerto Rico as part of Americanization and to aid a US imperial agenda of worldwide expansion, including basketball, volleyball, athletics, and boxing, among others.¹⁵ The development of Puerto Rican nationalism and Olympic sport occurred not only under this colonial context, but also under broader Latin American and Caribbean nationalist processes.¹⁶

Puerto Ricans' nationalist activities can be traced back to the late nineteenth century. On September 23, 1868, a group of Puerto Ricans declared the island's secession from Spain by establishing the Republic of Puerto Rico. The "Grito de Lares" was led by Ramón Emeterio Betances and Segundo Ruiz Belvis, but the uprising did not garner enough popular support and was quickly crushed by the Spanish authorities. Instead, Puerto Ricans opted for an autonomous solution to their colonial relation with Spain. Autonomy from Spain was granted in 1897, only to be dismantled in 1898 by the invading US forces. Under the new regime, the existing political factions continued under new names and in shifting alliances. Those who advocated for complete independence, both from Spain or the United States, persisted and resisted the new empire, just as they had done under Spain.

In sport, we see the same celebration of the Puerto Rican nation in the early twentieth century. However, scholars so far have not addressed the

ways in which nationalism and sport interact in Puerto Rico.¹⁷ Different Puerto Rican athletes expressed their nationalism at different venues and in different ways since at least the 1910s. Perhaps the most vocal of the early Nationalist athletes was Nicasio Olmo, a marathon runner from the town of Arecibo. Olmo won the New York Bronx Marathon in 1911 and 1912. For his 1912 victory he wore a jersey with the Puerto Rican flag. Under the US occupation, this flag was not recognized, becoming instead a nationalist symbol. As a result of Law #53, otherwise known as "Ley de la Mordaza" (Gag Law, 1948–56), which criminalized any actions or association to groups that advocated for Puerto Rico's independence, the flag became more visibly associated with the Nationalists. While the flag was eventually adopted under the Commonwealth status in 1952, repression against nationalists continued. The organizers prohibited Olmo from running with the Puerto Rican flag in 1912 and threatened him with expulsion if he used it. Olmo used it and quit his association with the New York Club, returning to Puerto Rico to open his own athletic club.¹⁸

Nicasio Olmo was not the only athlete to express nationalist conviction during the Americanization years. We see similar nationalist acts in international football (soccer). On July 25, 1914, the Argentine battleship Rivadavia visited San Juan, and a group of sailors played the local San Juan FC. After the game they had lunch at "La Malloquina," where they celebrated and toasted Argentina, Puerto Rico, and Spain. Later that night, the Argentines were hosted at the Casino Español, which was decorated with the Puerto Rican, Argentine and Spanish flags, bypassing the US flag, Puerto Rico's official flag at the time.¹⁹

Founded in 1922, the PN became the most radical of the pro-independence groups, with José Coll y Cuchi serving as its first president.²⁰ His 1923 book *El Nacionalismo en Puerto Rico* advocated for a peaceful and diplomatic approach to national freedom:

We long to be a sovereign people without holding hostile resentment to the United States. We love our soil, our race, our language, and our right to absolute freedom. Those are precisely the feelings that characterize the most pure nationalism . . . If the United States pretend to have in this island a group of servants, they are mistaken. We will keep firmly fighting for our ideal, for our flag, for our beloved freedom.²¹

As president of the PN, José Coll y Cuchi was the premier voice of Puerto Rican nationalists. Coll y Cuchi was a renowned fencer serving also as field judge. He helped to teach the sport—and, along the way, a

love of sport—to a generation of Puerto Ricans.²² However, it should be underscored that Coll y Cuchi's main sport was fencing. While fencing was popular in many countries, it was one of the sports that the Catholic Spanish monarchy celebrated in their sporting sphere. Fencing was one of the most popular sports during the Spanish regime and was considered the sport of the nobles and gentlemen, oftentimes used to "defend the honor."²³ As we will see later, given the significant Catholic and Hispanic component of Puerto Rican nationalism US sports were rejected by the Nationalists as hegemonic tools of the US empire.

Nationalists got a strong advocate with the arrival of Pedro Albizu Campos in 1924. A graduate of Harvard University, Albizu Campos became Puerto Rico's leading Nationalist and remains today one of the most salient symbols of Puerto Rican nationalism. Albizu Campos was elected president of the PN in 1930, the same year Puerto Rico sent its first delegation to the Second Central American and Caribbean Games (CACG) in Havana, Cuba. In an era of ascending nationalism and growing use of Olympic sport to display national might, one might think that Albizu Campos and the PN would have celebrated Puerto Rico's participation in these Games. But this was not the case. The PN did not acknowledge Puerto Rico's participation in the CACG of 1930, 1935, or 1938, despite the delegation proving highly successful. The fact that the Puerto Rican delegation actually represented the United States, and not Puerto Rico, was an obstacle to the Nationalists. Indeed, the PN never used Puerto Rico's Olympic delegation as an expression of national might (as other countries did) or in their fight for freedom. In the course of Puerto Rican participation in Olympic-patronized tournaments such as the CACG, Pan-American Games (PAG), and Olympic Games, the Nationalist Party mostly ignored Puerto Rico's delegation.

The Puerto Rican Olympic delegation throughout the twentieth century was actually used for different colonial political and imperial diplomatic purposes.²⁴ The invitation to attend the 1930 CACG came from the US ambassador to Havana, Harry Guggenheim, and the delegation carried the US flag. Under these circumstances, Albizu Campos was not willing to celebrate a colonial delegation that actually represented the imperial oppressor. Indeed, their official platform for the 1932 elections said that "nationalism repudiates alliances, understandings, pacts, etc., with government factions because it considers a moral impossibility the union between separatism that fights for the immediate establishment of the republic and the organized claudication that supports the present

irresponsible government, deferring with subterfuges the proclamation of independence."²⁵ In this regard, Puerto Rico's Olympic delegation was not only dismissed by the Nationalist Party, but—while not saying so publicly—was also considered an impediment for independence.

The reluctance by the PN leadership to recognize Puerto Rico's Olympic delegation contrasts with the feeling of many athletes and even their followers. The best example of a Nationalist athlete was Juan Juarbe Juarbe. Born on March 30, 1910, in Isabela, Puerto Rico, Juarbe Juarbe was one of Puerto Rico's best basketball players during the 1920s. He belonged to the Isabela's Gallitos team from 1922 to 1925, and while studying at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) belonged to the 1929 champion team Floral Park. Also in 1929, he represented the UPR at insular athletic tournaments in track and field, winning the high jump, 100 and 200 meters, the 440 meters hurdles, and the 4 by 400 meters race, a performance that placed him among the best athletes of this time.²⁶ As a result of this, he was asked to join the Puerto Rican delegation for the 1930 CACG in Havana.

While his participation with the delegation was brief, Juarbe Juarbe became an integral component of the Nationalist struggle for independence. His participation at the 1930 CACG demonstrates why the PN considered supporting Puerto Rico's delegation an impossibility. Juarbe Juarbe was selected to be the flag bearer for the 1930 Games and paraded with the US flag during the opening procession. However, in an interview years later Juarbe Juarbe confessed to being utterly depressed by the situation. While considering being flagbearer an honor, he desired more than anything to carry the Puerto Rican flag. As a compromise, he paraded with the US flag, but did so barefoot.²⁷ For the Nationalists, carrying the US flag at this ceremony was a direct affront because the local US colonial state, diplomatic representatives abroad, and the Puerto Rican officials collaborating with the United States portrayed Puerto Ricans as US-Americans, in effect denying Puerto Rican nationhood. When Juarbe Juarbe returned to Puerto Rico from Havana he met Pedro Albizu Campos and quickly won his trust, becoming his personal assistant and retiring from international competition. Soon after, he was expelled from the UPR due to his political activism,²⁸ and in 1936 he was accused of conspiring to overthrow the US government in Puerto Rico, although he was eventually absolved.²⁹ From 1936 to the 1980s, Juarbe Juarbe became the PN's foreign affairs secretary and lived in exile. Nonetheless, although his main objective was to denounce US imperialism in Puerto Rico and

promote bonds of solidarity throughout Latin America, he stayed abreast of Puerto Rican sport and managed also to utilize the Olympic scenario to denounce colonialism.³⁰

The 1930s was a highly unstable and politically volatile decade. The Great Depression of 1930 hit Puerto Rico particularly hard. High unemployment, dire social conditions, and overall despair produced numerous strikes and confrontations. Despite the United States's interest in fostering the Good Neighbor policy, repression was the governing attitude toward Puerto Rican Nationalists. Violence climaxed during what became known as the Ponce Massacre, when the colonial police opened fire on a peaceful Nationalist parade that commemorated the abolition of slavery and protested Albizu Campos's political imprisonment on March 21, 1937. The result was twenty people killed and over two hundred wounded, with most of the victims shot in their backs.³¹

Two years before this dreadful incident, Puerto Rico attended the third CACG in San Salvador in 1935. During the opening parade, Nationalist Manuel Luciano carried the Puerto Rican flag, in open defiance of the colonial mandates and in a clear act to display the national emblem (Image 4.1). Puerto Rican trainer, Cosme Beitia, provided the Puerto Rican flag to organizers every time a Puerto Rican athlete won a medal, and in an example of Latin American solidarity the Salvadorian band played the Salvadorian anthem instead of the US anthem for Puerto Rico. The solidarity with Puerto Rican independence reached the Salvadorian press when Nicaraguan journalist Juan Ramón Avilés wrote for *La Prensa*, "Olympically speaking, in San Salvador we have witnessed the birth of a nation: Puerto Rico."³²

Puerto Ricans returned to the island on April 22, 1935, to a heroes' welcome. Hundreds filled the streets in San Juan as a private plane flew over the sea of people towing a Puerto Rican flag. "La Borinquëña," a song that eventually became Puerto Rico's anthem, and Rafael Hernández's patriotic music played through loudspeakers. Reporter Arturo Gigante captured for the newspaper *El Mundo* the people's perspective and emotional attachments to the Puerto Rican delegation: "That's Puerto Rico absent, overflowing with the hearts of its sons, that against drawbacks and vicissitudes have managed to have the name of our small island be repeated with admiration and respect by all the nations, which, forming an enormous heart on the map, are the nucleus of the Hispanic republics, spine and marrow of our race."³³ These expressions are particularly special given the turbulent times of the 1930s. In a decade of heightened



Image 4.1. The Puerto Rican delegation parading at the open ceremonies at the 1935 Central American and Caribbean Games in San Salvador, El Salvador.
Courtesy of Carlos Uriarte González.

nationalism and state repression, Olympic sport became both a cultural and political battlefield between nation and colonialism.

Although Pierre de Coubertin envisioned the Olympic Games as a manly affair, Puerto Rican female athletes have also contributed to the celebration of the nation at international sporting events. Rebekah Colberg, a pioneer of Puerto Rican Olympic sport, became the first Puerto Rican woman ever to win a medal (gold) at the 1938 CACG in Panama City. Only twenty years of age, Colberg, dressed in black and white (PN flag colors; Image 4.2) stood at the winners' podium listening to the US anthem, which played every time Puerto Rico won gold. However, when the US anthem ended she stood there in the same platform and began singing "La Borinquëña." Seconds after hearing Colberg sing, other Puerto Ricans present at the ceremony joined her singing.³⁴ Colberg inspired countless other women to play sport and represent the nation abroad. Both the municipal stadium in her native Cabo Rojo and a multisport complex in San Juan bear her name.

Rebekah Colberg, though an independentista, was willing to collaborate with the authorities in order to continue representing Puerto Rico abroad, eventually becoming a physician. Juarbe Juarbe, as a Nationalist,



Image 4.2. Rebekah Colberg at the 1938 Central American and Caribbean Games. Courtesy of Jerjes Medina Albino, Wikimedia Commons.

was not willing to collaborate. His exile began in 1936 as he embarked on a Latin American and Caribbean journey advocating for Puerto Rico's freedom in countries such as Argentina, Chile, Peru, Venezuela, Mexico, Cuba, Colombia, Brazil, and Guatemala, among others. His first stop was representing the "movement" at the Populist Parties of the Americas Congress of 1936 in Buenos Aires. Over there, he stated that Puerto Rico was the only American nation occupied by another American nation, while calling attention to the fact that, with 2.2 million inhabitants, a population larger than six Latin American nations, Puerto Rico's case urged action.³⁵ Two years later, in 1938, he gave a talk before the Federation of University Students of Cuba, condemning Fulgencio Batista. While in Cuba in 1950, Juarbe Juarbe met Fidel Castro and quickly adopted

the Cuban struggle as his own.³⁶ While living in Mexico in 1954, he gave hospice to other Latin American revolutionaries such as Argentine Ernesto "Che" Guevara and Peruvian Luis de la Puente. Once the Cuban Revolution was successful he was granted Cuban citizenship and was a member of revolutionary Cuba's first delegation to the United Nations.³⁷

While Juarbe Juarbe's commitment to the Cuban Revolution was unquestionable, his first mission was Puerto Rico's freedom. In 1948, he attended the Ninth International Americas Conference in Bogota, Colombia, and gave a talk entitled "Independencia de Puerto Rico." Stating that the "Puerto Rican nation has been militarily occupied by the United States of America since July 25, 1898," he urged the international body to call on the United States to adhere to its promises of liberty and democracy and to sponsor the speedy establishment of the Republic of Puerto Rico via a Constitutional Convention.³⁸ By the 1940s and 1950s, Juarbe Juarbe was mainly an international advocate of Puerto Rico's independence, yet later in life he confessed that he always followed Puerto Rican sport, be it on radio, television, or in the press.³⁹ He took advantage of any opportunity to denounce US imperialism in Puerto Rico, including the platforms provided by the Olympic Movement. Once again, at the 1950 Central American and Caribbean Games in Guatemala, Puerto Rico paraded with the US flag. Juarbe Juarbe was in Cuba, where he met a contingent of Guatemalans who had come in solidarity with Cuban revolutionaries. It didn't take long for him to conspire with the Guatemalans to go back and sabotage the opening ceremonies. Two Sandinista Nicaraguans, Dr. Carlos Castillo Ibarra and Professor Edelberto Torres, joined other young revolutionaries and together managed to hoist the Puerto Rican flag, play Puerto Rico's anthem "La Borinqueña," and throw twenty thousand flyers in the air with independentista propaganda at the time Puerto Rico paraded during the opening parade.⁴⁰ When the Guatemalan band played "La Borinqueña" (instead of the US anthem), Juarbe Juarbe exclaimed through the loudspeakers that "Guatemala does not recognize a colony, we are against colonialism in America!"⁴¹ This incident angered the US ambassador to Guatemala, Richard Patterson, who was present and left the stadium threatening to introduce an official complaint. Juarbe Juarbe's tactic was successful in bringing attention to Puerto Rico's colonial problem, as the incident was covered in the US press by newspapers such as the *New York Times*, the *New York Herald Tribune*, and the *Chicago Tribune*.⁴²

Despite Juarbe Juarbe's Nationalist and anticolonial demonstration at

the 1950 Games in Guatemala, the PN again failed to recognize the delegation. Instead, it denounced it. Pedro Albizu Campos openly rejected the Puerto Rican delegation as colonial, saying that "we have to summon those bastards that go abroad using Puerto Rican money to carry the [US] flag and claim to have an anthem in their country," saying further that the delegation was "an exhibition of slaves."⁴³ Like Albizu Campos, José Enamorado Cuesta, former Nationalist military trainer,⁴⁴ also accused Puerto Rican sportsmen, especially those associated with US Major League Baseball, as yankophile traitors.⁴⁵ Even when the Puerto Rican delegation at the opening procession at the III CACG in San Salvador carried the Puerto Rican flag, the PN did not use that act as an example of nationalism through sport. Cuesta did acknowledge this and other similar *individual* expressions of nationalism that "have been demonstrated abroad by athletes who have resented their categorization as Yankees and insisting [instead] on being recognized as Puerto Rican nationals."⁴⁶ But, as an institution, the PN rejected Puerto Rico's delegation.

The Nationalists did have a reason to associate Puerto Rico's delegation with colonial leadership. Puerto Rico's Olympic Committee (COPR) was established within the structures and by the colonial administration. During the 1940s, COPR was led by Julio Enrique Monagas, a loyal ally of the Partido Popular Democrático (PPD), the party that led the political reforms that culminated in the Commonwealth in 1952. As such, COPR and Julio Enrique Monagas, by providing a platform to celebrate the nation and doing it so under an "autonomous" relation with the United States, were integral in the preservation of colonialism. As the Puerto Rican flag became the official flag of the delegation, Nationalists began to understand the power of the Olympic Movement for nationalism and its potential uses for political freedom.

Nationalism, Independence, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

The Nationalists' quest for independence reached a climax in the 1950s. On November 30, 1950, members of the PN staged an armed insurrection in several municipalities in the island, attacking Blair House in Washington, DC, where President Truman was staying temporarily, as well. In October 1954, four Nationalists opened fire in the US Congress, calling for Puerto Rico's freedom and denouncing the new Commonwealth status as a

colonial farce. During the 1950 uprising, Nationalists took the town of Jayuya and declared the Republic of Puerto Rico.⁴⁷ However, the uprising was quickly tamed by the well-armed and well-trained local National Guard. The National Guard used ten US P-47 Thunderbolt fighter planes dropping 500-pound bombs and spraying several towns with .50-caliber armor-piercing machine guns with a capacity to release 1,200 rounds per minute. Four thousand soldiers from the 296th Regiment took possession of a town of 12,000, arresting anyone in the streets.⁴⁸ The insurrection was in reaction to the political negotiations in Congress. Puerto Ricans, with congressional sponsorship and approval, moved toward establishing the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, in a process that started in the late 1940s.⁴⁹ However, this Commonwealth, although providing a US-approved Puerto Rican Constitution, did not alter the core colonial statutes as established in the Jones Act of 1917. Luis Muñoz Marín's PPD led the colonial reforms that sought a limited degree of autonomy. While the Nationalists by now used armed resistance to claim independence, another pro-independence party committed to pacific strategies entered the political scene. The Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño (PIP) was established by former PN activists who chose a peaceful path toward independence and PPD followers disaffected by the PPD's abandonment of its independence platform.⁵⁰ Gilberto Concepción de Gracia, a former Nationalist, spearheaded the PIP and managed to amass significant electoral support, obtaining 19 percent of the votes in the 1952 elections, positioning the PIP as the PPD's premier opposition party.⁵¹ However, internal party struggles, anti-independence repression, and the solidification of US hegemony led to the PIP's rapid decline.⁵²

Independentista activism contrasts with how the Puerto Rican delegation was presented in international competition. Puerto Rico participated at the Fifth CACG in Barranquilla, Colombia, in 1946, using the US flag throughout the events, including the opening and closing ceremonies. Puerto Rico's first appearance at the Olympic Games occurred in 1948 in London. Since the US delegation participated at these Games, and given that an Olympic nation cannot send two delegations, Puerto Rico was allowed to participate, but carrying a different flag from the United States.⁵³ For the London Games, Puerto Rico was represented by the coat of arms that was granted to the island in 1511 by the Spanish monarchy and still used officially (Image 4.3). In lieu of a Puerto Rican national flag, and following Puerto Rican pride as a Hispanic people, Puerto Rican

PUERTO RICO



Image 4.3. Puerto Rican flag at the 1948 Olympics in London.
Courtesy of Malarz pl, Wikimedia Commons.

athletes fully embraced the coat of arms as a symbol of Puerto Ricanness during the these decades.⁵⁴

Sport was definitely part of the activities being surveilled as part of the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) surveillance of independentistas. For example, in 1945, policeman Rafael Correa from the town of Caguas reported to the FBI that in a meeting of the PIP there was a discussion about the shameful colonial experience of Puerto Rican athletes abroad.⁵⁵ Gilberto Concepción de Gracia, or the PIP, did not publicly react, either to celebrate or condemn, the Puerto Rican delegation abroad; while Concepción de Gracia was an avid baseball fan,⁵⁶ he did not express particular scorn or pride in Puerto Rico's Olympic participation.⁵⁷ Concepción de Gracia's silence does not mean that the PIP disregarded sport entirely. The PIP's propaganda and organizational activities during the 1950s included work with trade unions, community associations, newspapers, women's groups, and youth. In 1953, these youth clubs included cultural and entertainment activities and the sponsorship of sport.⁵⁸ The fact that the PIP included sport as part of the community organization is indicative of the progressive adoption of sport not only

for entertainment, but also to foster a sense of communal unity. This was certainly the point of view of Concepción de Gracia. While not necessarily celebrating the colonial delegation abroad, the PIP did incorporate sport as another tool for community uplifting, and particularly in the recruitment of youth. The PIP's change of attitude toward sport evidences a recognition of the difference between the colonial government's pro-US affinity and the benefits of sport to build the nation from the bottom up and to recruit a new generation of independentistas. In that regard, the PIP distanced itself from the PN, which had condemned the 1950 delegation as "lackeys of the Empire," and moved to incorporate sport into their programs.

The acceptance of Olympic sport by nationalist and independence leaders as a vehicle for Puerto Rican nationalism occurred outside the Partido Nacionalista by a new wave of activists led by Juan Mari Bras after the late 1950s. Frustrated by the increasingly detached and bureaucratic policies of the PIP, Juan Mari Bras and others left the PIP to pursue a new way to organize the independence movement. In 1959, the Movimiento Pro Independencia (MPI) was established under the leadership of Mari Bras in order to unite dispersed pro-independence groups. After the defeat of the 1950 Nationalist insurrection, the systematic repression under the Gag Law that left the population in a constant state of paranoia, and the FBI surveillance program, the pro-independence groups became increasingly unstable. The MPI tried to reorganize and regroup nationalists and independence supporters. Their second point in their political thesis sought to

stimulate the alliance of the vanguard patriots with the forces of Puerto Rican affirmation aimed at advancing concrete actions in defense of the national patrimony, national rights, and Puerto Rican national culture, pursuing the isolation of the annexation forces and their definite defeat in the different daily spheres.⁵⁹

The MPI proposed the unity of different anticolonial groups to advance the struggle for freedom. They made a clear differentiation between independence unity and anticolonial unity. The first moved toward the unification of all of the forces for independence; the latter sought to mobilize all of the forces that sought decolonization, but, most important, "to advance concrete actions in defense of the patrimony, rights, and national culture." For the MPI, the mobilization of anticolonial unity was critical because they included "all Puerto Ricans that agree in

their supreme loyalty to Puerto Rico as their only *patria* and fight against the colonial state."⁶⁰ In other words, their focus was to find common ground among all of those that sought a national project to defend Puerto Rican culture and identity and fight against the structures of colonialism. Those who sought decolonization through full annexation to the United States threatened Puerto Rican national culture, and thus were excluded from this alliance. Of particular importance to our case is that the MPI left a clear space for national culture, including sport.

Juan Mari Bras, while not being a particular fan, did play some sports in his youth.⁶¹ Perhaps he was not a public fan of Puerto Rico's Olympic delegation, but he was always supportive of Puerto Rico's Olympic sovereignty. One of Mari Bras and the MPI's most enduring legacies was the 1959 establishment of the newspaper *Claridad*, which became a weekly news source for nationalist struggles. Nationalist Carlos Raquel Rivera, a prominent artist, wrote about sport and politics in one of *Claridad*'s early issues. Noting that Puerto Rico's national anthem "snatches tears from the depths of one's soul," and that the "national flag is not seen, but embraced," Rivera fully endorsed the Olympic Movement as a space to fight for national existence. He denounced those who sought US-federated statehood, since this status would invalidate Puerto Rico's Olympic nationhood. Instead, he urged that an independent Puerto Rico would be the only means to guarantee a truly independent Olympic delegation.⁶² Accompanying Carlos Raquel Rivera's article was a drawing that displayed a number of athletes standing proudly behind a flying Puerto Rican flag (Image 4.4). The drawing most probably can be attributed to graphic master and independentista Lorenzo Homar, who served as the artistic director for *Claridad* at that time.

It was through *Claridad* that the MPI tried to reach out to as many people as possible and unite in one voice all of those who believed in the Puerto Rican nation. Despite the PPD's use of Olympic sport to legitimize the autonomous nature of the Commonwealth during the 1950s, it was that same power of sport to legitimize the existence of the nation that attracted this new wave of nationalists and independentistas to cheer the Puerto Rican delegation.⁶³ In other words, there was no denying that the Olympic delegation was sending a strong message that the Puerto Rican nation existed, despite the colonial nature of the Commonwealth. Notwithstanding achieving Olympic nationhood, colonial censorship still permeated Puerto Rico's delegation. At that time, the delegation was commonly known as Delegación de Puerto Rico, instead of Delegación

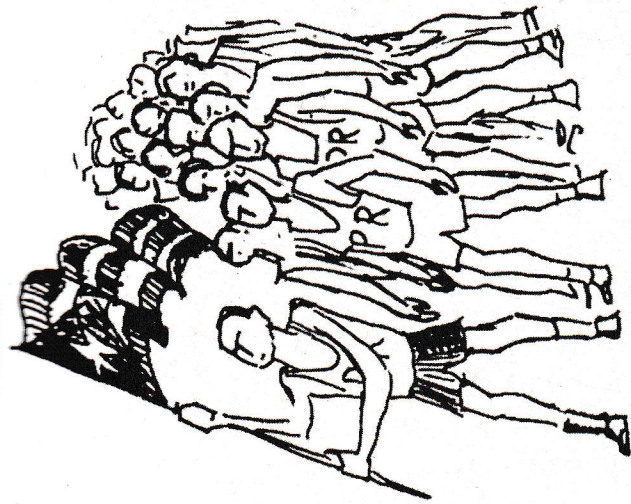


Image 4.4. *Claridad* (San Juan), December 21, 1959.

or Equipo Nacional de Puerto Rico.⁶⁴ Using the term "national" was too closely associated with the *nacionalistas* and could bring political repercussions.

The increasing acceptance of Olympic sport in Puerto Rico's struggle for independence after the 1960s has to be placed in the context of the increasing volatility of those decades. From the late 1960s through the early 1980s, independentistas in Puerto Rico and the diaspora were increasingly active and radical, despite having increasingly less electoral support. Radical independentista groups formed soon after the establishment of the Commonwealth, including the Federación de Universitarios Pro Independencia (FUPI) in 1956.⁶⁵ The MPI rebranded as the Partido Socialista Puertorriqueño (PSP) in 1971, and in 1974 the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional (FALN) was formed in Chicago. Between 1974 and 1981, the FALN carried out some 120 bombings in the United States, mostly of governmental offices and offices of multinational corporations.⁶⁶ Back on the island, the Ejército Popular Boricua (a.k.a. Los Macheteros) was established on July 26, 1976, by Filiberto Ojeda Ríos,

to embark on an armed struggle for Puerto Rico's freedom. In 1979, the Macheteros attacked a US Navy bus, killing two servicemen, while in 1981 another attack destroyed eight fighter planes at the National Guard Air Force Base in San Juan.⁶⁷ The Macheteros averaged two incidents per year during their first decade of existence.⁶⁸

Claridad noted the increasing importance of sport in the struggle for Puerto Rican freedom. In 1974, the newspaper launched a steady sport section, first managed by Jaime Córdoba and by Elliott Castro in 1976. In 1978, Castro made it clear to the readership that sport, particularly international, was crucial in the struggle for independence. Castro used the platform of *Claridad* to reiterate the importance of Olympic sport for Puerto Rican nationhood:

From our part, we hope to enlarge even more our activity and influence in the sport world. CLARIDAD will multiply its sport coverage. We have recruited new personnel, with whom we hope and trust be able to provide more attention and spread of amateur sport. Every day our Party and our newspaper recognize and give more importance to all sporting activity, always keeping in close mind that it is in sport the only area internationally speaking that we are recognized as an independent country, with our own personality, anthem and flag and representation.⁶⁹

By 1979, Puerto Rico had participated in twelve Central American and Caribbean Games, six Pan-American Games, eight Olympiads, and multiple World Championships in various disciplines. There was no doubt that, in international sport, Puerto Rico was a nation. In that year, Puerto Rico hosted its biggest international sport tournament, the Pan-American Games, the second largest multisport event in the world. Yet political controversy marred the event, when Carlos Romero Barceló, the pro-US statehood governor at the time, tried to sabotage Puerto Rican Olympic sovereignty by wanting to use the US flag and anthem next to the Puerto Rican in all ceremonies. A "war of the flags" ensued as a multisectorial coalition and the civil society joined in an effort to repudiate Romero Barceló's plans and affirm Puerto Rico's Olympic nationhood. The coalition urged the PNP administration to respect Puerto Rico's Olympic sovereignty and nationhood by desisting from pressuring the organizers to use both the US and Puerto Rican flags and anthems in representation of Puerto Rico. After much debate and public demonstrations the governor desisted, but still ordered the band to play the US anthem

during the opening ceremonies. Reacting to this, the people packed in the Estadio Hiram Bithron collectively booed the governor during his opening remarks, a demonstration dubbed then and still remembered as "La pitada olímpica."⁷⁰

Finally acknowledging the sporting sphere as a battleground, Puerto Rico's Nationalist Party acknowledged and celebrated Puerto Rico's delegation. Through the party's official publication, *Boletín Nacional*, the Nationalists sent a fraternal message to the visiting delegations: "Puerto Rico, the land of the Puerto Ricans, feels profoundly honored with your visit. Our wishes are that you take to your nations the most gratifying memories of the still unredeemed fatherland of Betances and Albizu Campos."⁷¹ Yet, by 1979, the defense of Puerto Rican nationhood no longer rested with the PN. The coalition to defend Puerto Rico's Olympic nationhood at the 1979 Pan-American Games included people from different shades of the independence and autonomy spectrums. Moreover, as seen during the CACG in 1935, 1946, and 1950, showing Puerto Rican national pride was not within any institution's purview, but equally up to athletes and their followers. As former 1960s Olympian Pedro Juan Camacho asserts, Puerto Rican athletes were for the most part patriotic.⁷² In 1979, Puerto Rican swimmer Jesse Vassallo, although wanting to represent Puerto Rico, was not allowed to represent his nation due to COPR's rule that an athlete had to reside in Puerto Rico for at least one year before the competition. Representing the United States, Vassallo, who earlier that year broke the 400 meters race at the World Championships in Berlin, won the 400 meters race in San Juan with another record-breaking performance. During the medal ceremony, while the US anthem played, the public in a spontaneous spark of nationalism and overpowering the speakers began singing Puerto Rico's national anthem, "La Borinqueña." Vassallo then raised and waved a small Puerto Rican flag he had brought with him to the podium, triggering a euphoric reaction.⁷³

Recognizing the power of sport to exhibit the nation, influence local politics, and move the masses in collective manifestations of nationalism, the independentista leadership also fully embraced Puerto Rico's Olympic sport as a site for national freedom and nationalism. Elected President of the PIP in 1970, Rubén Berríos Martínez was seen as the heir of the Independentista leadership after the passing of Gilberto Concepción de Gracia. A lawyer and scholar with degrees from Georgetown University, Yale University, and Oxford University, Berríos Martínez served multiple times as senator and, despite losing his nominations for governor, enjoyed

much popular support. Contrary to previous Nationalist and independence leaders that attacked Puerto Rico's Olympic delegation, by the 1979 Pan-American Games in San Juan Berrios Martínez fully understood the stakes of such delegation and the usefulness, almost imperative, of the Olympic Movement for Puerto Rican nationalism and freedom.

In a lengthy article in Puerto Rico's leading newspaper entitled "Nacionalismo y Bandera," Berrios Martínez attacked Romero Barceló's postures regarding the flags and anthems, arguing instead for the importance of the Puerto Rican flag for the people of Puerto Rico. He said that "a flag is neither an accident nor a colorful rag. A flag is years and years of suffering, sleeplessness, frustrations, heroisms, yearnings, hopes, [and] a common dedication of a people's cause."⁷⁴ Regarding the booing at the opening ceremonies, he stated that it "symbolized the people's preference in the struggle taking place in Puerto Rico between the North American and the Puerto Rican and protested the vexations of the last 81 years of domination."⁷⁵ He went on to list all of the components of these vexations and their impact on different segments of society, including the "sweat and blood" of sugarcane workers working for US economic interests, the "pleas" of women who saw their sons die in another country's wars, and the "rebelliousness of those fallen in Ponce under police machine gunfire that Palm Sunday."⁷⁶ Despite Albizu Campos and the PN's rejection of the delegation, Berrios Martínez now spoke for all nationalists in the full legitimization of the national delegation as redeemer of the nation and its colonized victims:

That day's gesture demonstrate the existence of a vigorous people, of a strong nationality maintained after 81 years of Americanization, demonstrate the freshness of our Latin American lineage. There are few peoples in the world, that after many years of control by the most powerful country in the world, have sufficient vital energy to reaffirm its nationalism. . . . What happened at these Games is a reflection of the enormous flow of nationalism that beats in the majority of Puerto Ricans and that, like the water streams that spontaneously searches and without apparent direction finds a channel, is conducted now in sports, for being this the option that for now is available.⁷⁷

Rubén Berrios Martínez was able to confidently express the importance of Puerto Rico's Olympic delegation for Puerto Rican nationalism and independence due to its disassociation from the US delegation. No longer was the delegation associated with the United States as it had been

in the 1930s, 1940s, and early 1950s. The negotiations that led to Puerto Ricans having their own national delegation had stabilized by the 1970s, though issues of colonialism still persisted. Being able to use the Puerto Rican flag and anthem in such popular sport mega-events was reason enough for Nationalist and independence leaders to jump on the bandwagon of the Olympic Movement. This participation, already embraced by the majority of Puerto Rican athletes and other delegates, was enough to serve as an amplifying showcase—perhaps the best—in the Puerto Rican struggle for independence and national survival. So much so that, two days after Mónica Puig's victory at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, the PN, in addition to congratulating Puig, said that "today we congratulate all athletes that place our banner in the highest. Nationalism is this sense of belonging that blossomed like an explosion with Mónica Puig's triumph, who we hope continues, like yesterday, embracing, forever, our flag."⁷⁸

Conclusion

Much has transpired since nationalist José Enamorado Cuesta lambasted against those Puerto Rican baseball players in the United States and the idea of baseball as an Americanization scheme. In March 2017, Puerto Rico's national baseball team reached the finals of the World Baseball Classic unbeaten, fueling once again nationalist fervor that even made the pro-US statehood governor, Ricardo Rosselló, cheer for the Puerto Rican squad during the final game against the United States.⁷⁹ Team manager Edwin Rodríguez openly confessed being heavily influenced by the patriots Pedro Albizu Campos, Ramón Emeterio Betances, and Eugenio María de Hostos, due to their conviction to "[offer] the greatest sacrifice . . . for an ideal they believe is true, and for the benefit of society."⁸⁰ The Puerto Rican squad lost to the United States, but not before uniting for two weeks a nation that still received them in San Juan with a heroes' welcome observed by the entire country.⁸¹

Puerto Rico's Olympic sport tells us much more than the confluences between nationalism and the Olympic Movement in Latin America and the Caribbean. Puerto Rico's unique status as a colony of the United States challenges an easy reading of identity through sport. In Puerto Rico, the Olympic Movement has been used or served as a platform to negotiate the very existence of a national identity that is at risk of being assimilated into another. The discussion over Americanization, Olympic sport, and

Adhemar Ferreira da Silva

Representations of the Brazilian Olympic Hero

FABIO DE FARIA PERES
AND VICTOR ANDRADE DE MELO

Introduction

Adhemar Ferreira da Silva stood out in the international Olympic Movement for twice being crowned champion in the triple jump contest (Helsinki 1952 and Melbourne 1956). His achievements had significant repercussions for Brazil's Olympic Movement. In the 1950s, Brazil had gone thirty-two years without winning an Olympic gold medal—since the 1920 Antwerp Olympics, when a Brazilian delegation participated in the event for the first time.

The first Brazilian delegation to participate in the Olympic Games, in 1920, was sent by the Brazilian Sports Confederation. The delegation had athletes participating in shooting, swimming, diving, rowing, and water polo. In addition to the difficulties of organization and travel, knowledge about the philosophy and structure of the Olympic Movement was limited. It must be considered that, even if Olympic sports were already popular and had been consolidating since the nineteenth century, there was still a degree of precariousness in the field, in addition to persisting conflicts among the sport leadership. Nonetheless, the 1920 Brazilian delegation won a gold (Guilherme Paraense, in the revolver event); a silver (Afrânio Costa, in the pistol event); and a bronze medal (in team pistol by Sebastião Wolf, Dario Barbosa, and Fernando Soledade).¹

The Brazilian Olympic Committee was founded in 1914. However, as a result of various problems, it became functional only in 1935, due to

nationalism is heightened in Puerto Rico, as the politics of colonialism—in effect of colonial Olympism—often create a push and pull between factions seeking particular political goals and advancing different ideologies. As Rubén Berríos Martínez aptly said in 1979, Puerto Ricans have been resisting (I would say negotiating) their identity against the assimilationist policies of the most powerful empire humanity has ever known. This negotiation has resulted in a strong sense of a Latin American and Caribbean identity, which lives and thrives despite Puerto Rico being an unincorporated US territory and its people having US citizenship. Yet the power of the Olympic Movement is such that Puerto Rico's Latin American and Caribbean identity shines through the structures of political constraints.

Puerto Rico's independence leaders, from Juan Juarbe Juarbe to Juan Mari Bras and then Rubén Berríos Martínez, noticed the potential of the Olympic Movement in the struggle for freedom. As the reality of a Puerto Rican Olympic nation cemented locally and internationally, independentistas and Nationalists adopted that reality and made it their own, aligning with most of the athletes who already embraced their patriotism at any sporting event throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. As Puerto Rico's colonial dilemma continues strongly into the present, the Olympic Movement stands as a central piece in the perennial discussion over decolonization and an unwavering element of Puerto Rican nationalism.

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