

protect American interests, focusing on U.S. priorities over international institutions, and promoting democracy. As one of the administration's top officials, with strong ties to the vice president and high credibility with the president, Rumsfeld was uniquely positioned to help develop those principles —yet his memoir contains little insight about how he did so and the consequences of Bush's national security doctrine for American foreign policy. To appreciate the worldview of the Bush administration as a whole and of the individuals who helped define it, a more thoughtful and deliberative evaluation is needed.

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*Dropping the Torch: Jimmy Carter, the Olympic Boycott, and the Cold War.* By Nicholas Evan Sarantakes. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. 340 pp.

Nicholas Sarantakes has produced an extremely interesting, well-researched book with a clear argument. According to Sarantakes, not only did President Jimmy Carter conduct the 1980 Olympic boycott poorly, but by even attempting a boycott he severely escalated the cold war. *Dropping the Torch* weaves a compelling story that is filled with fascinating details and provocative arguments. Among the main points that will generate considerable discussion among scholars of international relations is the claim that “it was the Olympic boycott, an American action, rather than the invasion of Afghanistan, that killed détente” (p. 13).

Sarantakes conducted impressive research for this book, including a thorough combing of the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library as well as trips to the British Olympic Association and the Olympic Museum in Switzerland. He also drew on materials at the National Archives, the U.S. Olympic Training Center, and the Avery Brundage papers at the University of Illinois. While not all readers will agree with his conclusions, Sarantakes cannot be faulted for his research. Moreover, his writing style in the book is lively and engaging (despite failure by the editors to correct spelling errors on the last names of Mike Eruzione [p. 5] and Carter himself [p. 11]).

*Dropping the Torch* persuasively portrays National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski as the driving force behind the Carter administration's decision to respond firmly to the December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Brzezinski saw the Soviet intervention as the worst international crisis since World War II. Soon after the invasion, Brzezinski helped convince Carter to consider boycotting the upcoming Moscow Olympics.

In early January 1980, Carter asked White House Counsel Lloyd Cutler to draft a memo laying out the proboycott position. Sarantakes criticizes Cutler for his role in the ensuing events, contending that he handled the boycott in an “inept and amateurish” fashion (p. 92). On the other hand, a few members of the Carter administration, such as Undersecretary of State Warren Christopher, receive praise for their actions. Sarantakes also positively describes the eloquent oratory of Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska, who believed that by boycotting the Moscow games the United States would miss a major

opportunity to expose flaws in the Soviet system. Senator Bill Bradley of New Jersey, on the other hand, strongly supported the boycott and agreed with Carter's suggestion that all future summer Olympics take place in Greece.

Among the most surprising revelations in the book is the fact that a majority of the American people in early February 1980 approved of the boycott. Popular opinion shifted dramatically in late February, however, due in great part to the American ice hockey team's dramatic victory over the seemingly invincible Soviet team at Lake Placid's Winter Olympics. Indeed, one of the real strengths of *Dropping the Torch* is the thorough discussion of the so-called miracle on ice. Carter was thrilled by the hockey team's gold medal performance, hosting a White House reception for the players. Yet, somehow the president failed to understand that the enthusiasm most Americans felt about the hockey team's triumph at Lake Placid was one of the most powerful arguments in favor of participating in the Moscow games later that year.

Another fascinating section chronicles the trip to Africa by boxer Muhammad Ali, whom Carter hoped could convince leaders in Tanzania and Nigeria to join the boycott. Ali's visits to those nations failed completely, but Sarantakes blames Carter, rather than Ali. Sending an athlete to do a diplomat's job was arguably another major mistake the president made, and Sarantakes characterizes this decision as "the product of patronizing attitudes" (p. 118). A general problem in the Carter administration, which Sarantakes points out, was the lack of any expert on international sports. One factor that Sarantakes fails to consider in this regard, however, was that Andrew Young had resigned from his post as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations a few months before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Young would have been a much better choice than Ali to visit Nigeria and Tanzania. He also was a lifelong fan of the Olympics who might have been able to convince Carter not to boycott. In fact, Young would later play a key role in bringing the 1996 summer Olympics to Atlanta (Andy DeRoche, "Andrew Young and Africa: From the Civil Rights Movement to the Atlanta Olympics," in *Globalization and the American South*, eds., James Cobb and William Stueck [Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005]).

A bigger weakness than not discussing the possible significance of Young's resignation is the failure by Sarantakes to acknowledge the impact of other aspects of the American response to the invasion of Afghanistan, such as Carter's decision to assist the mujahideen rebels and the quest by Congressman Charlie Wilson of Texas to arm them with stinger missiles. These developments were probably at least as important as the Olympic boycott in ending détente. Earlier Soviet interventions in Angola and Ethiopia, and later American policy in Nicaragua, undoubtedly, also, contributed to the renewal of confrontation between Moscow and Washington as much as the 1980 boycott, but are not mentioned here.

In spite of such omissions, Sarantakes has made a major contribution to the history of U.S. foreign relations. *Dropping the Torch* is an excellent book that should be read by anyone with an interest in the 1970s, the Carter administration, American/Soviet relations, or the history of the Olympics.

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