

Dropping the Torch: Jimmy Carter, the Olympic Boycott, and the Cold War. By Nicholas Evan Sarantakes. (New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. xvi, 340. \$28.99.)

Although his previous works have concentrated on military history, here the author expands his repertoire into the realm of sport and diplomacy. The result is the first truly comprehensive history of the 1980 Olympic boycott. Nicholas Evan Sarantakes catalogs, in great detail, all of the significant episodes leading to the U.S. boycott based on an impressive array of sources culled from numerous archives, interviews, newspapers, and other publications. He argues that it was the inflexibility and incompetence of Jimmy Carter and his chief advisors that led to a boycott that more skilled officials might have avoided, and that it was the boycott itself—not the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan—that “killed détente” (14).

The book is organized chronologically, beginning with chapters exploring the careers of the two figures at the center of the boycott—Jimmy Carter and Lord Killanin, president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC)—the Olympic rivalry between Los Angeles and Moscow, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The bulk of the book—its eight middle chapters—is devoted to the boycott effort itself and the few successes and many setbacks for the Carter administration. The final three chapters recount the 1980 Moscow and 1984 Los Angeles Olympics and offer conclusions.

This work should find a ready audience among scholars interested in the Cold War and the Olympic movement more specifically. It largely replaces the previous literature related to the 1980 Olympic boycott, which focuses almost exclusively on the damaged careers of the American athletes, and it adds to the growing body of literature related to “soft power.” Most impressive is the meticulous research that went into this study. Sarantakes has managed to piece together virtually every meeting held by the Carter administration, the IOC, and numerous other organizations, not only from the American point of view but also the international perspective. The book is also highly instructive for readers wishing to learn more about the inner workings of the IOC, the relationship between national Olympic committees and national governments, and the division within the Carter White House.

The book is not without flaws. Most telling may be one instance in which the exact same quote is used in two different places, in which Canadian prime minister Pierre Trudeau laments that “a boycott would destroy the dreams of many Canadian athletes” (120, 196). A similar sense of déjà vu overshadows much of the work as ideas and phrases are occasionally repeated. The book also suffers from a distressing recurrence of minor spelling and grammatical errors,

which number more than two dozen, including misspelling “Carter” as “Cater,” “Los Angeles” as “Los Angels,” and “Reagan” as “Regan.” Such errors do not detract from the author’s argument, but we might expect better from the editorial staff at an elite academic press.

Despite such minor flaws, *Dropping the Torch* adds substantially to the literature covering the modern Olympics and is indispensable reading for Cold War scholars.

Lander University

Kevin B. Witherspoon

The Baltimore Bank Riot: Political Upheaval in Antebellum Maryland. By Robert E. Shalhope. (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 2009. Pp. x, 196. \$50.00.)

In the summer of 1835, the Bank of Maryland, Baltimore’s largest and most influential financial institution, closed its doors abruptly. Though the Panic of 1837 was around the corner, there had been no local, state, or national economic crisis precipitating the bank’s closure, and any signs of weakness or instability had been a few years earlier, before the ascension of new bank president Evan Poultney and several new and prominent directors, led by rising lawyer Reverdy Johnson. The new regime radically increased the circulation of its currency, as well as its volume of deposits. This temporary boost in the solvency of the Bank of Maryland, unfortunately, had been accomplished through financial maneuvers that, if not at the time technically illegal, were both risky and ethically questionable.

Though Poultney approved of much of the new direction of the bank (he understood that banking was evolving and the rules were changing), he was a highly ethical Quaker who was, for the most part, not involved in the machinations of Johnson and other directors, who formed a club devoted to enriching themselves, using their “day jobs” to boost the bank and themselves. In the legislature, Johnson secured a charter for a largely bogus insurance company, which helped funnel money to the members of the club, while the Clerk of the City Orphan’s Court (a member of the club) used his agency’s funds to inflate the bank’s deposits. When the fatal combination of shaky investments and outright corruption shuttered the Bank of Maryland, Johnson and the members of the club had made fortunes but hundreds of others were ruined. The Bank of Maryland had been the first in Baltimore to offer interest on deposits, luring workingmen, shopkeepers, and small businessmen to entrust it with their savings, all now lost in the bank’s failure; popular outcry especially focused on the loss of the Orphan’s Court funds. Key newspaper editors joined and inflamed the outrage, all made worse by the directors’ refusal to release bank records (which, of course, would