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# The Olympics: An active tool for peace?

**Editors Note** — George Beres is the manager of the University Speakers Bureau. He served as liaison for Greece during the Olympic Scientific Congress, held in Eugene last summer.

Peace in our time. That was the goal of a tragic statesman who hoped to avert impending world war in 1939. It was the belief of a decent man, but naive world leader British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain shut his eyes to the inexorable move toward world war by Nazi Germany.

Today there are no well-meaning Chamberlains deluding their people about "Peace in our time." All leaders know that peace, if it is to be had in the nuclear age, must be for ALL time. If not, their nations will be passengers on a lovely, delicate blue-green globe spinning through space to eventual oblivion. In an age when mutual self-destruction is but an arm's length away, "Peace in our time," is not a reassuring maxim.

from an event which had boycotts of the 1980 Games in Moscow and the 1984 Games in Los Angeles? Are we to expect resolution of conflict through an Olympic movement in which Israeli athletes were murdered at Munich, and whose South African entrants ask to compete despite the injustice of apartheid that segregates their citizens?"

Still, in an imperfect world, the Olympics come closest to symbolizing a human's respect for a fellow human.

This was demonstrated here in Eugene last summer during the Olympic Scientific Congress. Media attention, already focused on the upcoming events in Los Angeles, gave scant attention to the Congress.

But the most significant moment of that Olympic summer came not in the Los Angeles Coliseum, but in this river city 1,000 miles to the north. It was in a proposal of a member of the Greek Parliament, George Papandreou, son of Andreas, the Greek prime minister. In his keynote address to the Congress, he invited the International Olympic Committee to consider Greece as permanent site for future Games.

It was when Papandreou's statement was linked to those of two other international spokespersons that it took on connotations of justice and peace.

One was the written message to the Congress by the Greek Minister of Culture, Melina Mercouri. She suggested a neutral zone be created in Greece as a permanent site for the Games. Then she went an important step further to link the Olympics with nuclear disarmament. She said in terms that should be etched on the consciousness of every world leader:

"Olympia can become more than the site of the Games every four years. Let it also be a permanent headquarters for those working for international conflict resolution."

Lord Killanin, immediate past president of the International Olympic Committee, has a special appreciation for the potential impact of the games on peace. "I think," he said, "the Games have done something to contribute to mutual understanding in the world. If we can all come together, it will be for a better world, and we shall avoid the holocaust which may well be upon us if we are not careful."

The other statement in Eugene brought a pragmatic reality to the Papandreou proposal. It was made by Dr. Harry Edwards, University of California sociologist and noted black sports activist.

He could not buy Papandreou's idea of future Games permanently in Greece. His concern was for how Third World nations could some day be able to host the Games, or a portion of them. Edwards visualized future Olympics being held at five different sites at the same time, making it possible for Third World nations to afford to sponsor one of the five. Symbolically, the five simultaneous sections of the Games could be represented by the five rings of the Olympic symbol.

In reality, the Papandreou and Edwards proposals need not be at odds with each other. The change to five sites could fulfill the goals of both. One location could remain a perpetual neutral zone in Greece, as that original site of the ancient Games already has suggested. The other four could rotate among the other nations of the world. The diminished financial demands would make it realistic for Third World nations to sponsor portions of the Games.

The permanent site in Greece would provide a historic link with earlier Games of antiquity, allow for a permanent Olympic Headquarters, and — most significantly — become a center for international conflict resolution.

I have lived in Korea and known Koreans. I sense what the 1988 Games in the Republic of Korea could mean to a people who feel it ascribes to their war-torn land a place of honor in the family of nations. But I fear the tense armed truce, virtually just a marathon run from Seoul, makes the 1988 Games there unrealistic.

It may be the difficult task of the International Olympic Committee to take the Games elsewhere; or the disheartening responsibility of the Koreans themselves to relinquish rights to the Games. But in the interests of peace and the perpetuation of the Games, they should be moved from Korea.

Newsweek Magazine said, "It is hard to imagine keeping the Olympics free of controversy at a site just 23 miles from the demilitarized zone separating South Korea from the Communist North. Given the troubled recent history of the Games, investors and potential visitors are certain to be particularly wary next time around."

If the 1988 Games must be moved — and it may be the Korean sponsors themselves who feel impelled to urge the change — no single nation can be prepared to accept sponsorship with so little time to prepare. That is where the 1984 Olympic Congress proposals of Edwards and Papandreou could combine for a viable alternative.

The International Olympic Committee — already haunted in private by the thought of terrorism at the Games in Seoul — has the ultimate decision to make. If it recognizes the wisdom — the necessity — of choosing a new site, there are alternatives.

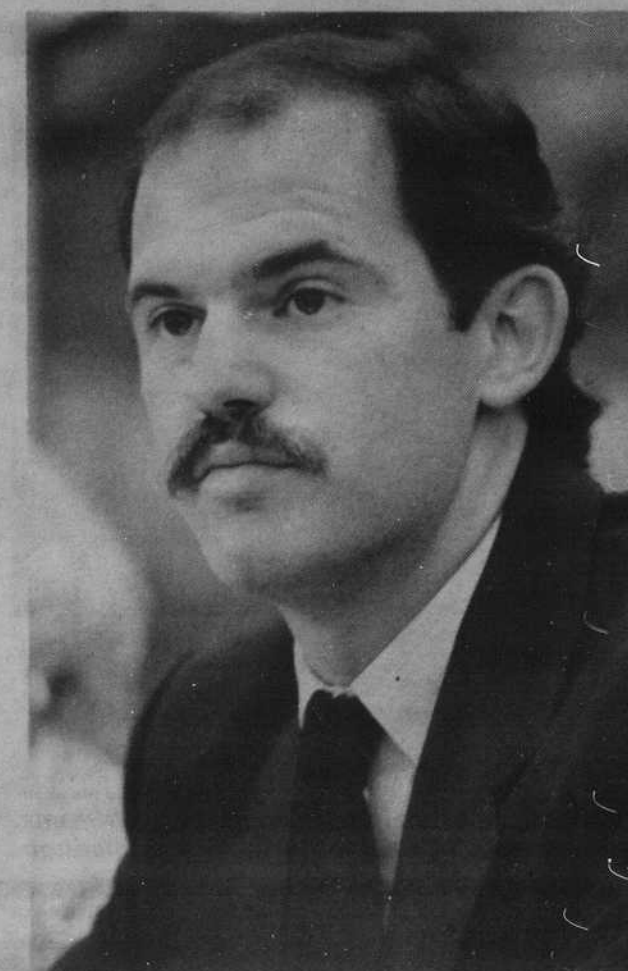
First, it can consider the hosts of the last two Olympiads: the Soviet Union and the United States, who have facilities still ready for use. What better way to save the wounds of the boycotts than by helping resolve the 1988 crisis?

Consistent with the Papandreou-Edwards plan of Eugene, they should be but two of five game hosts. Two others sponsor events natural to their own athletic history and for which they are likely to have existing facilities.

The fifth Olympic ring would have significance far beyond an international championship. It is the one proposed permanently for Greece.

The Greeks could hold a marathon run near the site of the original run. It could have special connotations for peace. A permanent Olympic headquarters at Olympia would concentrate on a resolution of world conflict during the four years between Olympiads. The pursuit of peace ultimately would take precedence over the chase for gold.

The goal of the athlete would continue to be that personal search for sporting excellence. But in the old setting of Greece, the Olympic torch would illuminate a shared goal for humankind: Peace for all time.



George Papandreou



Harry Edwards

## Commentary



Graphic courtesy of Olympic Scientific Congress

Various voices speak prophetic warnings, desperate alerts that the nuclear-powered nations of the world lead us on a treadmill of self-destruction. These are dry-throated echoes of your voice, and mine, as we watch the hands of the doomsday clock move ever closer to eternity's precipice.

Time is short. But while time remains, it is on the side of survival. This is the moment for the multilingual tongues of the world's conscience to be heard in a unified voice. That voice, while haunted by its own imperfections, is that of the Olympic Games.

The reaction of the skeptics is predictable. "How," they ask, "can one expect the path to peace

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\*Information and GMAT application forms are available in OSU's Graduate Business Programs Office, College of Business, OSU, Corvallis, OR 97331, phone 503-754-3490.

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