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Irish Journalists and the 1968 Mexico City Olympics*

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Abstract:

This article examines how Irish journalists depicted Mexico City as a suitable host for the 1968 Olympic Games. Mexican elites believed the event would attract foreign investment and tourists but faced an uphill battle as many European observers criticized the city as undeserving. Irish journalists often presented images of Mexico that were impacted by Ireland's own struggles of achieving sporting modernity and its sense of global importance as a white European nation. The image that emerged portrayed Mexico as rich in history and sporting infrastructure, but also mired in disorganization, superstition, and violence. These negative images may have propelled journalist and president of the Olympic Committee of Ireland, Lord Killanin, to the International Olympic Committee presidency.

Keywords: Ireland, Lord Killanin, Mexico, 1968 Olympics, sport

1. Introduction

As the 1968 Olympiad finished in Mexico City, the Dublin-based *Evening Herald* printed a letter from a reader, Geraldine O'Connor, that complained about the "shame" of Irish athletes underperforming at the Games. She did not blame the performers, but rather "their country" that allowed swimmers to train "in pools that are not fit to let dogs paddle in". Furthermore, she noted that the poor conditions of swimming facilities in Dublin

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impelled foreigners to “speak about that inbred personality, that laziness that exists among Irish people” (26 October 1968). The next day, another Dublin newspaper published a letter from a reader only known as “Sportsman” that expressed concern about the overall fitness of Irish people, especially with the increased popularity of automobiles. This reader expressed hope that the Irish population become more physically active after watching the Olympics because “[m]any Irishmen are overweight and fail to diet properly” (*Sunday Independent*, 27 October 1968). In both cases, the letters’ authors used the Mexico City Games to reflect on what they perceived to be negative attributes about Ireland and the Irish people.

It is highly unlikely that the *Comité Organizador de los Juegos Olímpicos* (Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games or COJO) for the Mexico City Olympics considered such thoughts while carefully crafting an image of the city and the Mexican nation for foreign consumption. This article examines how Irish journalists depicted Mexico as a suitable host for the 1968 Olympiad. Mexican elites faced an uphill battle in presenting an image of a stable Mexico to the world, as they faced skepticism from foreign observers, particularly European ones. Irish journalists, although European, came from a nation confronting its own issues with modernity. As a result, their portrayals of Mexico City, and its hosting of the Olympics, often presented mixed images that were impacted by Ireland’s own struggles of achieving sporting modernity and its sense of global importance as a white European nation. These portrayals varied greatly and depended on journalists’ own experiences, biases, and agendas within the Olympic Movement. The image that emerged highlighted Mexico’s rich history and modern sporting infrastructure, but also its reputation as chaotic and mired in superstition and violence. These negative images may have even played a role in the ascent of Irish journalist and president of the Olympic Committee of Ireland (OCI), Michael Morris, Lord Killanin, to the presidency of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1972, although he would eventually employ the sporting infrastructure Mexico City had built to his advantage when negotiating with difficult host cities.

As many scholars have noted, Mexican elites deeply cared about their nation’s international perception as an Olympic host because they viewed the Games as an opportunity to attract foreign investment and tourism and they put considerable efforts in presenting a modern image of the Mexican nation for the world to consume, even if those foreigners were skeptical of Mexico’s ability to host the Games (Rodríguez Kurí 1998, 114-115; Arbena 2002, 133-144; Zolov 2004, 159-163). Building off this point, Claire and Keith Brewster also have highlighted that Mexico City’s actual hosting of the Games engendered differing opinions from foreign journalists (2009b, 858-861), as many Europeans and North Americans remained skeptical of Mexico. Thus, international sports reporters interpreted the Olympics through a variety of lenses that varied in their portrayal of Mexico as an effective Olympic host. Irish journalists were no exception and shared similar attitudes to their international brethren. However, they also viewed the games from an Irish lens that reflected many of the anxieties about Ireland’s place in the world, particularly the Olympic world. In highlighting these biases and anxieties, this article joins a small but significant literature on Irish perceptions on Mexico and complements the extensive historiography on the *Irish press*’ role in popularizing sport and the impact this coverage has had on consolidating Irish identity (Harris 2007; Butler 2010)¹.

Relying on newspapers from the Republic of Ireland and documents from the Avery Brundage Microfilm Collection, this article sheds new light on perceptions on Mexico by another nation on the international sporting periphery that occupied an important position within the

¹ For an overview of the literature on Irish media and sports, see Crosson, Dine 2011, 109-116.

Olympic movement. It reveals that Olympic ideals intersected with ideas of national progress and modernity and how these intersections often produced contradictory results. Following a brief synopsis of Mexico's and Ireland's involvement in the Olympic Movement, this article examines how Irish sports reporters covered the games, then delves into a discussion about the writings of J.J. Walsh, the editor of the *Munster Express*, who attended the Games and traveled extensively as a tourist before and after them, and ends with an analysis of Lord Killanin as a journalist and Olympic bureaucrat. In the process, this article aims to examine the wide variety of ways that journalists from Ireland interpreted Mexico and its hosting of the Olympics.

2. *Mexico and Ireland in the Olympic Movement*

Mexico and Ireland both officially joined the IOC in the 1920s. Mexico had a member on the IOC since 1901, Miguel de Béistegui Septién, who had the trust and confidence of IOC members like Henri de Baillet-Latour. However, he did not have the same rapport with Post-Revolutionary Mexican politicians skeptical of his work as a diplomat for the pre-revolutionary regime of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1880, 1884-1911) and the counter-revolutionary regime of Victoriano Huerta (1913-14). Although officially established in 1923, the first Comité Olímpico Mexicano (COM) gained stability a year later when the Mexican government and the IOC reached a compromise on the committee's membership (De la Torre Saavedra 2017, 78-79, 281-295). While Mexico participated in the Summer Olympiads as a nation from 1924 on, Mexican performances disappointed elites. Mexico's lack of success at the 1932 Los Angeles Olympiad inspired future IOC member Marte Gómez to express to the Mexican Minister of Public Education his desire that their nation "appear like the various small countries of Europe", whose participants were "well prepared for triumph", while remarking on "the magnificent examples of Finland, of Ireland, of Czechoslovakia, and of Poland" (Gómez 1978, 377; English translation by the author). Ireland's relationship with the Olympic movement was impacted by its shifting relationship with the United Kingdom during the twentieth century. Addressing the IOC as one of its Vice-Presidents in Zagreb, Yugoslavia (now Croatia) in 1969, Lord Killanin highlighted Ireland's status as a "small" nation and noted that the Irish "have been represented in previous Olympic Games under different flags and [...] we have had over the years emigrants who have represented their adopted countries"². Indeed, while the Olympic successes of members of the Irish diaspora (especially Irish-Americans) had been sources of Irish national pride, an independent Ireland contingent did not participate until the 1924 Olympiad (McCarthy 2010, 4-5). Members of the Irish contingent for 1924 and 1928 came from both the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland, while the 1932 team that so impressed Marte Gómez only contained members from the Irish Free State. Due to changes in the International Amateur Athletic Association's constitution in 1934 and the creation of separate Irish citizenship in 1935, Ireland was barred from including athletes from Northern Ireland and the issue lingered until right after the Melbourne Olympiad of 1956. Lord Killanin, who had been elected a member of the IOC in 1952, played a large part in framing of the issue as a legal and not a political one. (Hunt 2015, 836-837, 845-846). According to Liston and Maguire, Avery Brundage's election as IOC president in 1952 "was critical to the subsequent adoption of the appellation 'Ireland' at the 1956 Games and the reinstatement of 32-county jurisdiction for the OCI" (Liston, Maguire 2020, 17).

² Killanin, "Vice President's Speech - 7th December 1969, Zagreb", Avery Brundage Microform Collection, LA84 Foundation (hereafter AMBC), Box 59, Reel 35.

Like Ireland, Mexico received concrete benefits from the presidency of Brundage. IOC members Marte Gómez and José de Jesus Clark Flores (who became an IOC member in 1952) developed close relationships with Brundage, who awarded Mexico City the hosting rights to a 1953 IOC meeting, the 1954 Central American and Caribbean Games, and to the 1955 Pan American Games. Due to a change in presidential administration and the ensuing political wrangling that took place, Clark Flores did not partake in the organizational efforts of the 1954 and 1955 events hosted by Mexico City (Wysocki Quiros 2016, 50-54). Despite his absence, Brenda Elsey contends that the Mexico City Pan American Games were better organized than the 1951 games in Buenos Aires and the 1959 games in Chicago (2017, 113). Later, Brundage supported Mexico City's bid for the 1968 Olympics, where the members of the Mexico City Organizing Committee stressed Mexican humility and navigated U.S.-Soviet tensions after the Cuban Missile Crisis to succeed over Detroit's bid (Witherspoon 2008, 40-46; Rodríguez Kuri 2014)³. As the first Spanish-speaking, the first Latin American, and the first "Third World" host of the Olympics, Mexico City's candidacy engendered a great deal of criticism and controversy, much of which focused on Mexico City's mid-level altitude and the ability of Mexicans to pull off hosting the Games, despite past success in hosting sporting events⁴.

Amidst these issues were the concerns of the Mexican government about financing the Games. The bid for the Games was organized with the blessing of President Adolph López Mateos (1958-1964), known as "el presidente deportista" (the sporting president) who also engaged in an ambitious foreign policy. His successor, Gustavo Díaz Ordaz, was less excited about hosting the Games and encouraged the local organizing committee to host the Games "on the cheap", which, according to historian Eric Zolov, "placed emphasis on efficiency, utility and display that would build upon the nation's inherent cultural advantages and extant infrastructure". As a result, the Mexican government and COJO united the existing sporting infrastructure of Mexico City through a painting scheme that converted the city into an Op-Art piece (2004, 167)⁵. Mexico had a history of modified Olympic participation. In the 1956, Marte Gómez informed a Polish journalist that it would be "sending to Melbourne a rather symbolic delegation" in order to offset the high cost of travel to Australia⁶.

Like Mexico, Ireland had a history of balancing ambitious goals with limited financial resources regarding sporting events. Mike Cronin has highlighted how financial considerations cut short the life of the domestic *Aonach Tailteann* festival, which lasted from 1924 to 1932 (2003, 397, 411). This concern with finances continued into the 1960s. In June of 1967, Killanin warned that only a small number of Irish athletes would travel to Mexico City, noting "it is important that all athletes on the Irish team should be in the best physical condition possible" (*Irish Independent*, 8 June 1967). The same article also reported that the honorary Secretary of the OCI advised that Ireland focus more on representation at the 1972 Munich Olympiad, due to concerns about Mexico City's altitude. By February of 1968, the OCI announced it would send forty-one athletes to the games, with emphases on boxing, "but only in the lighter weights

³ For analysis that stresses the weakness of the competing bids, see C. Brewster, K. Brewster 2009e. For an analysis stressing Mexico's success in positioning itself as a "Third World" nation in the context of the 1963 Games of the New Emerging Forces (GANEFO), see Elías 2018.

⁴ For an analysis of imperialistic European attitudes towards Mexico City altitude and its ability to host the games, see Kasperowski 2009. For studies on how altitude studies for the 1968 Games transformed the idea of amateurism and sport science, see Wrynn 2006 and Heggie 2008.

⁵ For a comprehensive investigation of the 1968 Cultural Olympics that emphasizes youth culture and highlights the influence of Mexico City's closing ceremony on future Olympiads, see Huntley 2018.

⁶ Letter from Gómez to Z. Mielkajczak, 17 August 1956, ABMC, Box 57, Reel 34.

where they could compete”, and track and field, particularly long-distance running (*Evening Herald*, 29 February 1968). Journalist Seamus Martin noted the likely presence of marathoner Pat McMahon at the Games, partly for his “world class” times and partly because his attendance at Oklahoma Baptist University would mean cheaper airfare for the OCI (*ibidem*). An unusual source of founding came for the Irish boxing team in August of 1968, when the British boxing magazine *Boxing News* donated £500 to the Irish Amateur Boxing Association from “the surplus of a fund” for British boxers’ training sessions for the Mexico City Games (*Irish Independent*, 28 August 1968). So, while Irish journalists constituted part of the European and North American visitors’ Mexican elites wanted to impress, they also lived in a nation whose Olympic participation was mitigated by limited financial resources.

3. *Irish Sports Reporters on the Mexico City Olympiad*

As noted in the introduction, international perceptions were a vital aspect to the Mexican Olympic project. The Mexican government did not overtly censor the Mexican press but, from the 1940s to much of the 1960s, journalists were confined by “presidentialism”, which Eric Zolov defines as “an unqualified reverence for the president as the supreme arbiter of political disputes and the standard bearer of the Mexican body politic” (2006, 13). As Zolov highlights, Mexican journalists were not passive observers in this process and some attempted to push the boundaries of this philosophy. While the Mexican government had a relatively smooth relationship with its own journalists, its relationships with foreign journalists appeared more contentious. According to Claire Brewster and Keith Brewster, foreign correspondents expressed concern about how effectively the government and COJO were working with journalists to promote Mexico. A U.S. correspondent “stressed that Mexicans lacked a basic understanding of how the international press worked”, which was especially concerning as COJO members were aware that hosting the Games “would stimulate the largest number of journalists that had ever covered a single event” (2009b, 858-859). The pre-Olympic critiques from the foreign press seem to have affected Mexican organizers, with Marte Gómez dismissing a negative portrayal of Mexico as “written by a person [...] who is not friendly to Mexico”, and he critiqued “those coming to Mexico with the particular purpose of looking for mistakes”⁷. In one case, Mexican Olympic figures were able to develop smoother relations with foreign journalists, as Clark Flores invited the president of the International Sports Journalists Federation to visit Mexico City, which apparently caused the journalist to become more positive in his opinion of Mexico City’s hosting capabilities (Carmona 1981, 102). It appears, that for all the preparations COJO and the government made to impress foreign visitors and observers, they struggled to incorporate foreign sports reporters into their mission to portray a stable and orderly Mexico.

From the press accounts of Irish journalists sent to Mexico City, the struggles in accommodating the international press seem apparent. Mitchell Cogley described the press situation as “near chaos” and lamented that, a day before the Games started, no tickets had been sent out. He also claimed, however, that “admission may be gained by just walking in and meeting enquiries with a blank look” (*Irish Independent*, 11 October 1968). J.J. Walsh lamented the lack of programs, the difficulties with communications, and traffic (*The Munster Express*, 20 December 1968). Brundage himself also asserted these difficulties, as he noted his disappointment with the set up at the Hotel Camino Real, which lacked a direct phone line to his room,

⁷ Letter from Gómez to Brundage, 11 December 1967, ABMC, Box 57, Reel 34.

a situation further aggravated by the tendency of the operator to cut phone calls short⁸. Despite these issues, it appears that COJO did make attempts to ingratiate these journalists. Paul MacWeeney of the *Irish Times* reported on a reception for 1,000 guests at the Hacienda de los Morales that provided plenty of food, drink, and music, causing the correspondent to note, “every city staging an Olympiad falls over backwards to impress the scribes, and the Mexicans kept up this tradition very fully indeed (12 October 1968).

For sports correspondents, much of the negative attention was focused on the impacts of altitude. Paul MacWeeney noted the faster times for sprinters and the slower times for distance runners but called the 10,000-meter race “a most fascinating affair” as a “group of five dark shapes” (referring to runners from Kenya, Ethiopia, and Tunisia) bided their time for the opportunity to pass “their Caucasian pace-setting rivals” (*The Irish Times*, 15 October 1968). He also characterized watching a steeplechaser “collapse in sheer agony” as evidence that “the gloomy predictions of an Olympiad [h]eld in rarified air” had come to fruition (*The Irish Times*, 16 October 1968). MacWeeney noted the difficulty for long-distance competitors from low-altitude countries, as did an article in the *Evening Herald* that further argued, “Mexico must be remembered and regarded as an enduring lesson as where not to site Olympic Games” (17 October 1968). Irish journalists even observed the effects of altitude on the Olympic Village, as Mary Finnegan noted that ascending the steep stairs to the Village dining area meant serious ankle injuries for some and, for others, “10 minutes recovery time from acute breathless bordering on asphyxia” (*Irish Independent*, 18 October 1968).

Although Mexican organizers had been concerned about uniting the different architectural styles of their sporting infrastructure, Irish journalists generally expressed positive attributes to the stadiums, arenas, and the Olympic Village, or as Finnegan called it, “Mexican Tír na nÓg” (*ibidem*). J.J. Walsh, who had attended every Olympics since 1936, called the Olympic Village, “one of the finest [...] I have so far seen” (*The Munster Express*, 20 December 1968). *The Irish Times* reported that Olympic legend Jesse Owens, an official invitee of the Mexican Government, commented that, although the rooms were smaller, the Olympic Village at Mexico City was superior to that of Berlin in 1936, especially the lounge and pool areas (15 October 1958). In addition, RTÉ’s Brendan O’Reilly positively portrayed the Village. In one television report, O’Reilly mentioned that Irish athletes were “enjoying their stay there immensely” and that “the food is first class” (*RTÉ*, 10 October 1968).

Mexican stadiums also received praise from Irish journalists. As Luis Castañeda has highlighted, the Estadio Olímpico, the Estadio Azteca, and the Palacio de Deportes were designed by different architects; the first stadium, built in the early 1950s, was hailed as a nationalist triumph for its use of local materials like volcanic rock, while the second stadium, designed by COJO president Pedro Ramírez Vázquez, was built with Mexico’s bid for the 1970 World Cup and with mass television audiences in mind, and the third venue, with design credit given to Félix Candela, was built specifically for the Olympics and his success allowed him to play a significant role in designing the Mexico City Metro afterwards (2014, 112-129, 140-149). A report in the *Evening Herald*, most likely by Mitchell Cogley, characterized the Estadio Olímpico as “a modernistic saucer [...] a perfect blend of the new and old Mexico” (12 October 1968). Also of note was the Tartan track material made by 3M, dubbed in the *Cork Examiner* as “one of the great success of the Mexico Olympics” (16 November 1968). J.J. Walsh also lauded the Tartan track surface, claiming it was “worth every peso”. He called the Estadio Azteca “the best,

⁸ “A.B.’s Visit to Mexico City”, 24 February 1970, ABMC, Box 84, Reel 46.

I have to date”, as “it accommodates 105,000 who are entirely protected by the sun and rain and everyone has a complete view of the carpet-like pitch”. He also characterized the construction of the other venues as “a superb achievement” and lamented that only wealthy nations could host the Olympics (*The Munster Express*, 20 December 1968). In particular, Walsh’s comment about “wealthy” nations forces a reconsideration of the simplistic scenario of a Latin American/Third World nation struggling to impress European/First World visitors.

Mexican fans received more critical treatment. Walsh noted his displeasure with their “unprecedented displays of fanatical patriotism”, contending that it made competitions featuring Mexican athletes “unfair”. He characterized the swimming venues as “too noisy to be enjoyed except by teenagers and swimming enthusiasts”. He continued, “Mexicans are too excitable and noisy[.] and the majority of the spectators were of that mercurial race” (*The Munster Express*, 24 December 1968). Walsh further suggested that Mexican fans influenced that judging in Irish boxer Eddie Tracey’s loss to Mexican Orlando Roldán, a sentiment shared by an *Evening Herald* writer (only identified as “Second”) watching the Games on television. The writer called Tracey “decidedly unlucky” to lose to Roldán “whose every belligerent gesture, let alone a punch, was cheered to the echo” (25 October 1968). This concern with the behavior of Mexican fans continued beyond the Olympic Games and into the 1970 World Cup, where some Mexican elites became concerned that Mexican fans’ celebrations of Mexican victories “threatened to turn into a type of patriotic hysteria normally associated with fascism”, thus undermining elite’s desires to portray a stable and cosmopolitan Mexico to foreigners (Brewster C., Brewster K. 2009a, 871). While it is doubtful that Walsh, a sympathizer of Francisco Franco who attended the Spanish dictator’s funeral, was concerned about fascism, it is possible that such energy coming from non-Europeans may have been seen as threatening. These reactions could also be attributed to Irish expectations of sporting decorum or to cultural norms surrounding noise. For example, Paul MacWeeney noted that the reception at the Hacienda de los Morales that impressed him featured three bands whose simultaneous performances produced a “somewhat startling” effect (*The Irish Times*, 12 October 1968).

Looming in the background of this coverage was the massacre of student protesters at Tlatelolco. Irish correspondents frequently wrote about the military presence and sometimes downplayed it. It appears that number of deaths reported in Irish newspapers varied. These variations include reporting the official thirty-nine provided by the Mexican government, contrasting that figure with the number of 200 offered by a Mexican student group, and simply characterizing the number of fatalities as “undisclosed” (*The Irish Press*, 5 October 1968; *The Irish Times*, 7 October 1968; *Evening Herald*, 8 October 1968). J.J Walsh informed that Mexican newspapers reported between twenty-five and thirty-five deaths, “but the public say: ‘Add an ought to it and it would be nearer the figure’” (*The Munster Express*, 20 December 1968). It should be noted that the number of thirty-nine given by the *Evening Herald* may have come from Mitchell Cogley who supplied reports directly from Mexico City for that periodical in addition to the *Irish Independent*. The *Irish Times*’ comparison of that official figure with the claims of the student group had no listed author, meaning it could have come from another source than Paul MacWeeney, who was normally identified in his reports on the Games. The *Irish Press*’ figure was proposed by journalist Hugh O’Shaughnessy, who did not attend the games and, although Walsh attended the Games, he did not report his numbers until two months after the massacre occurred and presented a situation where government troops acted “in desperation” against a persistent student movement and “any other people who happened to be in the way became victims” (*The Munster Express*, 20 December 1968). It should be noted that British sports journalist John Rodda, who was present at the massacre and reported 500 deaths to *The Guardian*, believed he was under surveillance for

the rest of his stint in Mexico and that Avery Brundage, in conversation with Rodda, questioned why the sports correspondent was reporting on events outside the Games (Brewster C., Brewster K. 2009d, 831). Unlike Rodda, it appears Irish reporters focused on sporting stories, making references to student unrest but using words like “riots” or “rioting” without judging in favor of one side or another (*Evening Herald*, 8, 9, 15 October 1968; *Irish Independent*, 9 October 1968; *RTE*, 10 October 1968)⁹. In general, Irish reporters wrote more about the military and police presence around the Olympic venues. MacWeeney noted the rumors of omni-present police were “greatly exaggerated” but noted that “those impassive Indian faces [of the police] have a somewhat menacing look” (*The Irish Times*, 7 October 1968).

MacWeeney’s comments on race highlight the fact that the 1968 Olympiad was a contentious site pertaining to race and that Irish journalists were white visitors encountering people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds in their daily activities, social interactions, and at athletic performances. Aside from the student protests, the 1968 Olympics are also famous for the protest of Tommie Smith and John Carlos. Irish journalists tended to either comment that their raised fist protest in support of Black Power was inappropriate for the Olympics, while others conflated Black Power with the success of African and African American track and field athletes. Thomas Myler, a boxing reporter, felt the display by Smith and Carlos “marred the Mexico Olympics”, as “the Olympic Rostrum is not a place to air any political beliefs” (*Evening Herald*, 21 October 1968). MacWeeney conflated Black political activism with the success of African athletes, particularly distance runners, at the Games. Under the heading, “Black Power”, he asserted that, because there were only two “white triumphs” in the track events, these Olympics may have represented a shift where “the coloured races” began to dominate all Olympic races, from sprinting to the marathon (*The Irish Times*, 15 October 1968). In addition, Walsh, who employed less politicized terms than MacWeeney to refer to Black athletes, also noticed their success at the Games and lamented that “[t]he whites are having a black, black time [in terms of performing in races]... No wonder Black Power reared its menacing head” (*The Munster Express*, 31 January 1969). While these journalists viewed Black athletes through racializing or racist lenses, they were not alone in associating the African American Black Power movement with Africans. According to historian Dexter Blackman, African Americans like Harry Edwards joined the campaign to ban South Africa from the 1968 Olympics and the Olympic movement, and these actions spurred a renewed interest in Pan-Africanism in the United States (2012, 1). Through the observations of MacWeeney and Walsh and the analysis of Blackman, it is possible to view the 1968 Olympiad as a Pan-African moment where activism overlapped with athletic performance. This overlapping was clearly outside the agenda of Mexican organizers and COJO and could reflect both racist and anti-racist sentiments.

4. J.J. Walsh, Journalist and Tourist

Amid protests, massacres, and Olympic records, the Olympics were also intended to display Mexico to the world as a popular tourist attraction. The Ministry of Tourism provided significant support for the Games, producing advertisements and films, often in conjunction with U.S. corporations, to encourage U.S. travelers to visit Mexico for the Olympics (Zolov 2001, 259-260). While the efforts to encourage tourism cannot be denied, historians offer different

⁹The focus on sports reporting did not separate these reporters from their counterparts from other nations. For example, Rein and Davidi highlight that for the 1978 FIFA World Cup in Argentina, the majority of international journalists only wrote about the World Cup and avoided discussions about the military junta governing the nation (2009, 677).

opinions on how effective those efforts were. Kevin B. Witherspoon offers a skeptical analysis on the official numbers offered by the Mexican government for the Olympics' impact on tourism, and points to Mexico's lack of economic growth following the Miracle years (2008, 144). On the other hand, Zolov has noted that tourists who visited Mexico during the 1960s often expressed favorable views of the nation and the Mexican government, while Brewster and Brewster have underscored the fact that Mexico's tourist sector continued to grow after the Games, especially in resorts like Puerto Vallarta, Puerto Escondido, and Cancún, despite the events at Tlatelolco (2001, 250-252; 2009a, 876). This section focuses on the writings of J.J. Walsh, who unlike Cogley and MacWeeney traveled Mexico extensively and wrote about these travels.

J.J. Walsh was the editor and owner of the Waterford-based *Munster Express*, inheriting the newspaper from his father, who had been the mayor of Waterford. In the obituary that ran in the newspaper he owned, he was described as "flamboyant", "eccentric", "sometimes ruthless", and possessing "a burning passion for sport and travel" (*The Munster Express*, 11 September 1992). Another Irish journalist once characterized Walsh's periodical as an "eccentric" local newspaper that "devoted acres of space to the worldwide travels of its owner" (*Weekend Examiner*, 20 June 1992). Among these travels were his visits to every Olympiad from 1936 to 1988 and the funeral of Francisco Franco, the Spanish Fascist ruler, in 1975. Walsh was not a "typical" Irish sports reporter in any sense of the word, but his previous experiences with Mexican and Mexican American culture, along with his willingness to travel throughout the country and his financial capabilities, provide a window into one tourist's experiences with elite Mexicans, wealthy members of the Irish Diaspora, and Mexicans working in the tourist sector.

Walsh's first encounter with Mexican culture stemmed from a stop in Los Angeles on his way to the 1956 Olympiad in Melbourne. He meandered Olvera Street in Los Angeles, where he noticed that Mexican Angelinos "retained a zest for amusement [...] imbued with an exemplary religious fervor" (*The Munster Express*, 1 February 1957). Walsh, himself a conservative Catholic, made frequent remarks about Mexico's Catholic practices, criticizing urban Mexicans for possessing "the same apathy towards religion as the Italians in Rome" and taking solace in the religiosity of rural Mexicans, but dismissing many of their beliefs and practices as "ignorance mixed with superstition" (*The Munster Express*, 7 February 1969). He did, however, view the presence of Opus Dei and the Christian Family Movement as positive signs for the nation's religious practices. Walsh also wrote of his visit to the Basilica of Guadalupe in Mexico City, which he had previously toured in his first trip to Mexico in 1958, and provided readers with a lengthy description of the story behind the Marian apparition of the Dark Virgin. His overall judgement appears to have been that fewer vendors and the demolition of the gift shop were positive developments for the shrine.

Aside from Catholicism, Walsh appeared to have an intense interest in Mexican history. He admitted to reading about the conquest of Mexico and when visiting for the World Cup 1970 wrote of his interest in Teotihuacán and even presented readers with the entire script of the presentation he witnessed at the pyramids (*The Munster Express*, 11 December 1970). Likewise, Walsh advised his readers to visit the "Museo de Antropología" that had been designed by COJO president Ramírez Vázquez, adding that two guides were "necessary, as the subject is so vast" (*The Munster Express*, 20 December 1968). Citing the work of Nestor García Canclini, Eric Zolov contends that this vastness had the planned effect of overwhelming visitors with information about indigenous cultures, so that they emerged with the notion of a single indigenous Mexico rather than having an understanding about different indigenous cultures within Mexico (2001, 244-245). From his writings about the Olympics, it is clear that Walsh emerged with the notion of singular Mexican culture, which served the Mexican elite hopes of presenting a unified, cohesive Mexican nation to the world.

Eventually Walsh left “the turmoil of traffic-choked Mexico City” to visit the resort city of Acapulco on the Pacific Coast, which was the site for the Olympic yachting events and a place he found “delightful” and “clean and wholesome”. He enjoyed the food at his hotel, particularly their breakfasts, and noted his fondness for the “quaint old parts” of Acapulco and its “bazaar-like area”, which he preferred over “ultra-modern chain stores such as Sanborns” (*The Munster Express*, 24 January 1969). Walsh visited Acapulco during its heyday as the crown jewel of Mexican tourism. As Andrew Sackett has noted, during this time, the city epitomized Mexico’s uneven development as the city featured world-class hotels and resorts as well as shantytowns, where many hotel and resort workers lived. The fact that Walsh did not mention the shantytowns was not exceptional, as the architecture for tourist attractions was designed for views of the ocean, not the city (2002, 501, 509). Walsh’s time in Acapulco went smoothly but with one exception - the celebrations that followed the British victory in the yachting event. In his observation of the celebration by the British yachters and their fans, Walsh noted, “how they [the British] loved hoisting their flags all over the world and through four centuries of time”. He then explained to his readership that no one paid “the Britishers” much attention, as “Acapulco [was] in far off Mexico and not Ireland” (*The Munster Express*, 24 January 1969).

Walsh’s highlighting of British behavior he found distasteful brings to light that the Mexico he navigated was influenced by his Irish identity. Throughout his travels, Walsh wrote of his interactions with members of the Irish diaspora, which began on his first trip to Mexico in 1958, when he traveled with a pair of Australians “of Tipperary descent” whom he met at the Melbourne Games. At the 1968 Games he would socialize with North Americans, naming two people who possessed the surnames of Dillon and Connolly (*The Munster Express*, 20 December 1968). On his flight to Acapulco, he made note of his encounter with “a jolly Englishman of Celtic strain” (*The Munster Express*, 17 January 1969). While these encounters on his second trip to Mexico seem to have been fleeting, Walsh appeared to make a strong connection with one of his “Mexican friends”, Mary Stapleton, a Kilkenny woman who “had lived amongst her beloved Mexicans for over fifty years and knew their faults and failings”. Stapleton “lived in a palatial residence” in the upscale neighborhood of Lomas de Chapultepec “with her lady secretary and servants” (*The Munster Express*, 20 December 1968). Walsh spent a great deal of space and words describing Stapleton to his audience, noting that she was a retired teacher who set up a school that she later sold to developers who converted it into the Maria Isabel Hotel, where Walsh stayed while attending the Olympic events in Mexico City (*The Munster Express*, 7 February 1969). Walsh would later revisit Stapleton when he came back to Mexico for the 1970 World Cup.

While amazed by its tourist attractions, Walsh’s depictions of Mexico wavered between condescension and understanding. For instance, he lamented that the Metro was not finished in time for the Games, calling the delay “typical of South America”, but acknowledged that “[i]t happens in Ireland, too”. He favorably compared his patience to that of other foreigners when dealing with the delay in printing tickets, stating that “[m]y previous knowledge of the procrastinating Mexicans stood me in good stead” (*The Munster Express*, 20 December 1968). After losing two rolls of film, he noted, “[t]he picture pool department had the worst service of any Olympics and one could lose one’s temper but for the admission of guilt and the exceptional humility and courtesy of the Mexicans in charge” (*The Munster Express*, 24 January 1969).

Overall, Walsh viewed the Olympics as a benefit to the Mexican nation. Not only did he view the Games as a financial success, he also professed that Mexicans benefited from “[t]he experience of running the games and meeting so many foreigners”, whose anger and frustration taught the Mexican nation “many salutary lessons” (*The Munster Express*, 24 December 1968). Despite this apparent need to learn lessons from foreigners, Walsh wrote that Mexico “had successfully stated the

biggest Olympics ever held, and that means that the greatest and grandest show ever in the world's history had taken place in the City of Mexico". He further added, "There is no race on earth (and I have experience with scores) more worthy of affection and appreciation than the Mexicans" (*The Munster Express*, 14 February 1969). Walsh's sentiments seem to vindicate both the sentiments of skeptical Europeans and ambitious Mexican planners. In his depictions, Mexico is inefficient and in need of instruction, yet modern and charming. In his return to Mexico for the 1970 World Cup, Walsh called Mexico "one of the richest emerging countries in the world", noting that the country had captivated him and many others (*The Munster Express*, 11 December 1970). Walsh echoed many of the polite, but condescending, remarks of U.S. tourists who visited Mexico, especially in terms of its "progress" (Zolov 2001, 252). However, he still came from a nation whose leaders were also interested in tourism as a form of economic development. In 1967, the publicity director for the Irish Tourist Board in North America told an audience in Mexico City that included the Mexican Minister of Tourism that, for Ireland, the tourist industry "forms the largest single item in our export trade" and encouraged Mexicans to visit the land of "the Latins of Northern Europe" (*Cork Examiner*, 5 August 1967). The success of this appeal is unclear, but it highlights that Irish journalists, whatever their biases and beliefs, did not come from an economic hegemon like their U.S. counterparts.

5. Lord Killanin, Journalist and Olympic Bureaucrat

Lord Killanin, born Michael Morris, was born in England, although his family maintained an Irish lordship. After an elite education that included attendance at Eton, the Sorbonne, and Cambridge, Killanin became a journalist for a series of London-based newspapers: first the *Daily Express*, then the *Daily Mail*, and, finally, the *Sunday Dispatch*. After volunteering to serve for the British army in World War II, Killanin spent his time in Ireland between residences in Spiddal, County Galway and Dublin. He became president of the OCI in 1950 and a member of the IOC in 1952. Within the IOC, Killanin rose to prominence in the mid-1960s, becoming Chef de Protocol and Chairman of the Press Commission in 1965, joining the Executive Board in 1967, and rising to Vice-President of the Board in 1968. In 1972, he succeeded Avery Brundage as President of the IOC (Rodda 1999, 13-14). In his obituary of Killanin, close friend and British journalist John Rodda stated that, prior to his stint as president, the Irish sports bureaucrat "liked nothing better than to finish his days at annual IOC sessions by having a drink with journalists – whose ways and work he understood more than most members" (*ibidem*). While Killanin's days as a full-time journalist were behind him, he still published articles in the *Sunday Independent* and the *Irish Times* to express his feelings about Mexico City's hosting of the Olympics.

The archival record makes clear that Killanin was skeptical about Mexico City's worthiness as an Olympic host. A month after Mexico won the bid to host, Killanin wrote Brundage about better English translations of IOC meeting minutes. The example he mentioned was a sentence that stated that he and another IOC member "were in control of the voting" [to host the Games]. Killanin added "I wish we had been able to control voting!"¹⁰ Months after the 1968 Mexico City games had ended, Killanin continued to criticize the 1963 awarding of hosting rights to Mexico City, telling Brundage "there was considerable criticism about the amount of lobbying, entertainment and free visits to Mexico City", and added, "The Cynics said that Mexico received the number of votes equivalent to the number of people who went on the free trip"¹¹.

¹⁰ Letter from Killanin to Brundage, 27 November 1963, ABMC, Box 58, Reel 35.

¹¹ Letter from Killanin to Brundage, 5 March 1969, ABMC, Box 59, Reel 35.

In between these letters, Killanin published these thoughts for Irish consumption. His 1964 article for the *Sunday Independent* put forward the idea of Dublin hosting the Olympic Games. Killanin wrote that Ireland could serve as a model for amateurism, contrasting the Gaelic Athletic Association and the Irish Rugby Football Union with the Soviet Union and United States, who systems produced “shamateurs”. The article also expressed a concern with the bidding process for the 1968 Olympiad, critiquing “all the ballyhoo” that accompanied Detroit’s bid and chided Mexico City because it “spent large sums inviting I.O.C. representatives [...] to ‘sell’ their city” and for “leaving little gifts and mementos” for those voting on the hosting rights. Killanin took partial credit for preventing this type of behavior for the bidding process to host the 1968 Winter Olympiad. While promoting Dublin’s candidacy for hosting, Killanin also acknowledged that the Irish capital lacked the sporting infrastructure that Mexico City possessed, specifically a stadium with a capacity of 100,000 and a solution to “the deplorable situation regarding swimming baths”¹². Much like other Irish journalists, Killanin never portrayed a consistent image in regard to Ireland’s and Mexico’s comparative modernity. While it is clear he did not view the bidding process for Mexico City legitimate, it also appears that Mexico City’s winning bid spurred him to think about Ireland’s possibilities as an Olympic host. His argument centered not on Dublin’s infrastructure, but on the moral legitimacy it could offer to the amateur movement. It should be noted, however, that many Irish runners attended U.S. universities on athletic scholarship in the 1950s and 1960s, a situation both Killanin and Brundage felt needed to be remedied. The IOC president declared that almost all cases of non-U.S. citizens receiving athletic scholarship were “certainly illegitimate”, while Killanin noted his dismay with the letters he received from athletes on scholarship in the United States, noting, “the letters are quite illiterate”¹³. Despite this situation, Killanin still professed that a Dublin Olympics would reinvigorate amateurism within the Olympic movement.

As Killanin increased his influence within the IOC, Mexican sports bureaucrat José de Jesús Clark Flores also established himself as a powerful presence within the Olympic movement. As stated earlier, both joined the IOC in 1952, when Avery Brundage was elected as the first non-European president of that entity. Both seemed to have benefitted from Brundage’s election. For Clark Flores, Brundage’s presidency proved to be a boon, although both men were fully aware of European skepticism. Regarding the 1953 IOC meeting hosted by Mexico City, Brundage informed Gómez and Clark Flores, “The Olympic movement, of course, is international but our European friends have always felt that they are better able to manage its affairs than those from other sections of the world where progress has not been so great”¹⁴. The big victory came in 1963 and the winning bid for the Olympic Games. Clark Flores eventually became the head of PASO (Pan American Sports Organization) and earned favorability with the López Mateos administration (1958-1964). With the shift to the administration to Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970), Clark Flores lost power in COJO to Ramírez Vázquez and eventually resigned, much to chagrin of Brundage (Rodríguez Kurí 2003, 40-43).

The issue of South African inclusion in the Games likely alienated Clark Flores from Brundage and allowed Killanin to occupy a middle ground between the two. Brundage supported including the Apartheid nation in the Olympic Games, whereas representatives from Asia and Africa threatened to boycott the Games if South Africa were included. Killanin was part of a

¹² Newspaper clipping, *Sunday Independent* [n.d.], ABMC, Box 58, Reel 35. Killanin sent this article to Brundage with a letter dated 19 February 1964.

¹³ Letter from Brundage to Killanin, 3 July 1965, ABMC, Box 58, Reel 35; Letter from Killanin to Brundage, 15 June 1965, ABMC, Box 58, Reel 35.

¹⁴ Letter from Brundage to Gómez and Clark F., 23 December 1952, ABMC, Box 138, Reel 78.

committee to investigate the issue of South Africa's inclusion and among IOC executive board members, he argued for a compromising position between the two sides (*The Irish Press*, 24 April 1968). Killanin would later recant this position, claiming he never supported South Africa's inclusion. He also blamed Clark Flores' temper for the lack of discussion regarding the safety of a potential South African delegation at the games (Killanin 1983, 43). Clark Flores was a trusted ally of Brundage but sided with the Mexican government and COJO in supporting the ban, a move that strained his relationship with the IOC President¹⁵. After the games, Brundage continued to express his disgust with what he characterized as "the gravest crisis" of the Mexico City Olympics and insisting that it was his solution to the issue that was agreed upon¹⁶. He later informed Clark Flores that "had your Mexican proposal been adopted, the Games of the XIX Olympiad would certainly have been ruined"¹⁷. It appears then, that although Brundage and Killanin had slightly differing opinions of South African inclusion, the issue benefited their relationship because of the distance it created between Brundage and Clark Flores.

During the games, rumors abounded about Clark Flores and Killanin challenging Brundage for the IOC presidency. Neither did run for president, but Clark Flores was reelected and Killanin was elected to Vice-Presidencies in October 1968 (there were a total of three). Clark Flores apparently had support from IOC members from the Soviet Bloc, African, Asia, and Latin America to challenge for the presidency. However, out of loyalty to Brundage and out of concern about his relationship with the Díaz Ordaz administration, Clark Flores apparently negotiated a deal where he agreed to support Brundage in 1968 and Brundage agreed to step down and to support Clark Flores' bid for the IOC presidency in 1972 (Carmona 1981, 125-126). In an interview with *The Irish Times*, Killanin noted that he also had been asked to run against Brundage but, due to a lack of temporal and financial resources, he chose not to. However, he did note that in his new position as Vice-President he would wield significant power: "As I live in Western Europe and I am the nearest inhabitant to the office [IOC headquarters] in Lausanne, it is quite natural that several responsibilities are put on me"¹⁸.

It appears that one of Killanin's "responsibilities" was to highlight the mistakes of Clark Flores and other Mexican sports bureaucrats. Within his first year as an IOC vice-president, he warned Brundage, "if we continue to allow the Olympic Movement to be run from Mexico and Rome and not Lausanne we are really heading for trouble"¹⁹. One of these issues was the use of notepaper by members of the IOC, especially board members. Killanin informed Brundage of his concern about the variance of notepaper used by multiple members, but only named one perpetrator, Clark Flores, whom he identified twice for his transgressions²⁰. In turn, Clark Flores expressed to Brundage his frustration with Killanin pushing out Clark Flores on a project they were supposed to work on together and with his "interfering" with a committee that he had declined to take part in, adding that Killanin's "schemes have caused an extremely dangerous situation" with the National Olympic Committees²¹.

¹⁵ For a more in-depth analysis of Mexico's role in the South Africa dispute see Rodríguez Kurí 2015 and Brewster C., Brewster K. 2009c.

¹⁶ Letter from Brundage to Manuel Ratner, 11 October 1969, ABMC, Box 52, Reel 31.

¹⁷ Letter from Brundage to Clark Flores, 21 November 1969, ABMC, Box 52, Reel 31.

¹⁸ Newspaper clipping, *The Irish Times*, [n.d.], ABMC, Box 59, Reel 35. Sent by Killanin with two other articles from the *Irish Times* and a letter to Brundage, 14 December 1968.

¹⁹ Letter from Killanin to Brundage, 29 August 1969, ABMC, Box 59, Reel 35.

²⁰ Letter from Killanin to Brundage, 15 May 1969, ABMC, Box 59, Reel 35.

²¹ Letter from Clark to Brundage, 29 November 1968, ABC, Box 52, Reel 31; Letter from Clark to Brundage, 28 September 1969, ABC, Box 52, Reel 31.

As Clark Flores' and Brundage's relationship continued to show strains – the former even asked the latter for a “direct, private conversation” to discuss their recent disagreements²² – Killanin continued to confront Brundage with rumors that sullied his and Clark Flores' reputation. In June of 1970, Killanin asked Brundage about “vested interests of [IOC] members”, and noted that during the 1968 Olympiad, “rumours were rife that you personally had an interest in the hotel in which we were staying, and further had business interested with General Clark”. He also quoted an article that ran in the London-based *Sunday Times* a month earlier that characterized Clark Flores as “still damaged by Mexico's tardy Olympic preparations on which his construction firm held huge contracts”, and further noted that a “whispering campaign” against Clark Flores and Brundage and their alleged business dealings had done “untold harm” to the IOC²³. Brundage denied the allegations and insisted that the construction contracts for the games were handled by the Department of Public Works²⁴. Considering the Díaz Ordaz administration's frosty relationship with Clark Flores and Brundage, the allegations in the *Sunday Times* appear doubtful. More importantly, though, the characterizations of “tardy preparations” and corruption related to Mexico City's hosting were weaponized against both Brundage and Clark Flores. It should also be noted that Clark Flores was not the only Mexican to run afoul of Killanin during this time. In a May 1970 letter to Brundage, Killanin questioned the accuracy of Ramírez Vázquez's statements regarding how well Mexico City followed IOC protocol as Olympic host and admitted, “I am sure he [Ramírez Vázquez] thought me a great nuisance!”²⁵

Brundage contacted Clark Flores later that month and provided his response to Killanin, “who brought this matter to my attention”²⁶, as well as the newspaper clipping Killanin had quoted from the *Sunday Times* on the potential successors to Brundage as IOC President. The article described Killanin as “Old Etonian, ex-war correspondent... writer... film producer... Fluent French” and contrasted him with “Mexico's Spanish-speaking General Jose De J. Clark [*sic*]”²⁷. Clark Flores responded with a letter from the Mexican Secretary of Public Works denying the awarding of any contracts to him or his company and asked that “if the IOC headquarters, or Lord Killanin in his capacity as Chairman of the Press and Public Relations Commission, officially make the necessary clarifications with the editors of [...] ‘L' Equipe’ and ‘Sunday Times’ ”²⁸.

This portrayal of Killanin by himself and European media as a cosmopolitan Western European and Clark Flores as a monolingual Mexican reflects a larger consideration of Mexico as a wholly separate entity from European nations, which was a notion that Mexican sport bureaucrats were trying to fight by hosting the games. Clark Flores addressed this issue in front of the executive board of the IOC in March of 1969. In what was clearly an allusion to the massacre at Tlatelolco, he lamented that “[t]he controversial world of today [...] presented an unfavorable atmosphere” for Mexico City to host the Games and that protests like those in Mexico City “had been taking place in other parts of the world”²⁹. While Clark Flores attempted to place the massacre within a global context, it is clear that not all of his fellow

²² Letter from Clark to Brundage, 29 July 1970, ABMC, Box 52, Reel 31.

²³ Letter from Killanin to Brundage, 12 June 1970, ABMC, Box 59, Reel 35.

²⁴ Letter from Brundage to Killanin, 3 July 1970, ABMC, Box 59, Reel 35.

²⁵ Letter from Killanin to Brundage, 8 May 1970, ABMC, Box 59, Reel 35.

²⁶ Letter from Brundage to Clark, 16 July 1970, ABMC, Box 52, Reel 31.

²⁷ Newspaper clipping, *Sunday Times*, 17 May 1970, ABMC, Box 52, Reel 31.

²⁸ Letter from Clark to Brundage, 12 August 1970, ABMC, Box 52, Reel 31.

²⁹ Clark, “To the Executive Board of the International Olympic Committee”, 13 March 1969, ABMC, Box 52, Reel 31.

board members agreed. Fourteen years later, Killanin admitted his “complete ignorance of the situation” in Mexico prior to arriving in Mexico City, believing that the protest had “spread from Europe”. However, he concluded that “the situation in Mexico was different from that in Europe”, as “[t]he roots of discontent went deep in the country’s history” (Killanin 1983, 48). Killanin’s portrayal of the events separated Mexico from Europe, whereas Clark Flores attempted to include Mexico City within a global 1968 that saw demonstrations and violence in Paris, Chicago, and Londonderry/Derry, among other locations.

In his retelling of the events surrounding Tlatelolco, Killanin blamed Brundage for placing pressure on Díaz Ordaz to stop the protests and chastised Clark Flores for his callous response to the deaths of the protesters (*ibidem*). That he avoided directly blaming Díaz Ordaz afterwards is critical because, in his years as IOC president, Killanin developed a more cordial relationship with the Mexican government and Olympic bureaucrats during the presidency of Luis Echeverría (1970-1976). Clark Flores’ death in 1971 ended his threat to become IOC president and Killanin found himself in situations where he needed help from Mexican sports bureaucrats. One of these instances was the 1975 Pan American Games, where Mexico City “rescued” them after a meningitis epidemic prevented São Paulo from hosting the sporting event (*El Informador*, 18 October 1974; 20 October 1974, 16-B). The relationship between Killanin and Mexican authorities continued to improve the following year when the IOC president asked Mexico City organizers to be prepared to host the 1976 Olympic Games, after strikes in Montreal threatened to delay preparations for the games there (*Le Soleil*, 20 May 1975). Although Mexico City did not end up hosting the 1976 Olympics, Killanin visited the Mexican capital for the Pan American Games, the 1976 inauguration of Mexican president José López Portillo, and a 1978 meeting of the IOC (*The Times*, 8 October 1975; *El Informador*, 1 December 1976; *The Times*, 12 April 1978). In negotiations surrounding the 1984 Olympiad with the Los Angeles organizing committee, Killanin again used the threat of Mexico City hosting the Games to win leverage (*The Times*, 29 August 1978). While Killanin consistently portrayed Mexico as an unworthy Olympic host, once he became president, he employed Mexico’s modern sports infrastructure to his advantage.

6. Conclusion

In his recent analysis of 1968 Olympics, historian Lamartine Pereira DaCosta has suggested studying mass sporting spectacles through “nuanced” approaches that emphasize both “progress and retrogressions” (DaCosta 2020, 174-175). A similar approach is needed to understand how Irish journalists interpreted the Mexico City Olympiad and its legacy. On one hand, aspects of the Games impeded the ability of COJO and the Mexican government to sculpt a pristine image of Mexico to foreign visitors and viewers, including the Tlatelolco massacre, the Black Power protest of Smith and Carlos, and the journalists’ own previous travel experiences, racial biases, and political agendas. On the other hand, positive aspects of Mexico – at least from the perspective of Mexican elites - permeated the writings of these journalists, including its desirability as a tourist destination, the friendliness of its people, and the sophistication of its sporting infrastructure. Unlike their fellow white journalists and tourists who visited Mexico, these Irish writers could not look down upon a Mexican sporting infrastructure that surpassed their own in many ways. Even the aristocratic Lord Killanin, who for years argued that choosing Mexico City had been a mistake, was forced upon the city’s hosting abilities to further his agenda within the Olympic Movement. These conflicting portrayals of Mexico are reflected in J.J. Walsh’s observation that “one may laugh one’s way, but not force one’s way, through Mexico” (*The Munster Express*, 20 December 1968).

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