



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

19 March 1980

Dear Sir Denis,

Thank you for your letter of 7 March in which you explained the background to the Resolution passed by your Association at its meeting on 4 March. I was grateful for your assurance that the Association had no desire to embarrass the Government in their task of negotiating for the withdrawal of the Russians from Afghanistan.

I have also noted your statement to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons on 5 March that the Association would not ignore a serious decision by the majority of the House that it would be undesirable for British athletes to go to Moscow - indeed, that the Association would give great consideration to such a decision. As you will know, the House of Commons, on a free vote, has now resolved by a very large majority to support the Government's view "that this House condemns the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and believes that Great Britain should not take part in the Olympic Games in Moscow". I am sure that your Association will give full weight to the considered view of Parliament in this matter.

I must emphasise that the Government are not approaching this question in any spirit of antagonism towards the athletic community. We have the highest admiration for the Olympic ideals. It is not we who are perverting that ideal; rather, it is the Soviet Union which is making cynical use of the

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idealism of sportsmen to try to convince the world that its invasion of Afghanistan is a little local matter of no importance. The Soviet Union has been building up its forces for years to an extent far outstripping any conceivable defensive purposes. Now, for the first time, it has used them, unprovoked, outside the countries of the Warsaw Pact. Free countries must bring home as dramatically as possible that this sort of action cannot be taken with impunity. That is the significance of Monday's vote.

But we have also made clear that it is no part of the Government's intention, nor indeed within the Government's power, to compel individuals to stay away from the Games. Contrary to the impression given by some news reports, for example, civil servants and members of the forces remain free to attend on the basis of their normal leave entitlement. Decisions must be for the individuals and their sporting organisations. I am well aware how hard those decisions must be. The Government's part is to give a lead and to bring into focus the conclusions which would be drawn from participation in the Moscow Games.

I realise that the Olympics are unique. But as Chancellor Schmidt as put it, "participation in the Games would be inappropriate so long as Soviet occupation of Afghanistan continues". As you know, a number of Governments including the British Government have been represented at a meeting in Geneva to see whether it would be practicable to hold high-level sporting events elsewhere than in Moscow this year. Of course, Governments cannot organise such events, which are very much a matter for the national and international governing bodies of individual sports. But there may be ways in which governments can help with the arrangements. We for our part stand ready to offer full and generous support. I understand that your General Secretary will be meeting Mr. Hurd in the next day or two. He or Mr. Monro will be glad to discuss the possibilities in detail.

*Yours sincerely*

*Roger Hebble*

Sir Denis Follows, CBE.