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SAVING TELEGRAM
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PREPARATION FOR THE OLYMPICS

1. The Soviet authorities are putting on as confident a face as they can in the period leading up to the Moscow Olympics. This morning's Pravda recorded with satisfaction the IOC's announcement of 27 May that 85 countries have said they will attend, commenting that this was despite insistent pressure from the United States in favour of a boycott, and concluding: "May the 1980 Olympics give a new impulse to the development and strengthening of the Olympic movement, reflecting mankind's will to peace on earth." A recent article in Sovietskiy Sport presented the boycott campaign as a flop, claiming that the Americans have long since lost their leadership in world sport, and that the vast majority of the most successful teams in Montreal would also be represented in Moscow.

2. It will however take a sustained effort by the Soviet propaganda machine to put the gloss back on the Olympics for the Soviet people. The knowledge that a boycott was being widely canvassed probably did more than any other single Western gesture to bring home to the man waiting for the Moscow omnibus the degree of Western concern over the Soviet Union. Many will have realised that the boycott movement had something to do with Afghanistan, although the connection was only made occasionally by the Soviet media. The extent of public anxiety has been evident for example even to the casual British visitor, who is frequently questioned as to whether a British team will come. The fact that important sporting nations like the United States, Japan and West Germany will not be here in July will also obviously detract from the sporting value of the events themselves.

3. Ordinary Soviet citizens have had to make sacrifices for the Olympics, and blamed shortages on the need to stockpile for them. Many goods have disappeared from the markets for long periods: for example, bed and table linen were recently unobtainable, and rumour said that supplies were being diverted to the new hotels. Meat recently disappeared from sale in Kiev, where it is normally widely available, and the general assumption was that it was being stockpiled. The same has been true, at other times, and other places, of many other foodstuffs. Other goods have subsequently reappeared stamped with the Olympic symbol - and at a higher price.

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4. There will be further disruptions to normal life in a number of Soviet cities during the Games themselves. Many people will not be allowed into Moscow at all: thus most of the children will be dispatched to summer camps, students will leave the universities early so that their accommodation can be used for tourists, and ordinary out-of-town people are already finding it hard to travel to Moscow. There are reports that owners of old or battered cars will not be able to drive them in Olympic cities so as not to spoil the view.

5. It is difficult at this stage to predict whether the Soviet public will eventually judge the Olympics worth the cost. If the Games can plausibly be presented as a general success, and if large numbers of foreigners - especially Westerners - attend, Soviet citizens will probably take a patriotic pride in the achievement. Many, however, are bound to feel aggrieved at what they will see as Western attempts to wreck 'their' Games and to take this as proof of general anti-Soviet feeling in the West at least as much as discontent over Afghanistan in particular. They may be encouraged in such a mood by the warnings that are being issued before the Games of the dangers of ideological - or even physical - contamination arising from contact with foreigners. Stern articles have appeared in the press warning Soviet people in general terms of the dangers of ideological contamination by foreigners: others, more specifically, have recently claimed that the CIA, with the cooperation of other Western countries, is busy training groups of provocateurs to stage subversive activities during the Olympics. The official warnings of ideological contamination are being reinforced by crude warnings of the danger of physical contamination. The local authorities (police, administrators of hostels etc) have spread scare stories about the diseases that foreigners will bring with them, and on the papers, cigarettes etc they carry. According to this story, the children are being sent away to protect them from disease. Teenage girls are being warned that it is strictly forbidden to have sexual relations with foreigners, with reference back to the 1957 World Youth Conference which was followed by a sharp rise in both the birth rate and the incidence of VD.

6. The Soviet authorities have taken steps to restrict the ability of dissidents to use the presence of large numbers of foreign journalists here this summer to advance their views. Their exiling of Sakharov in January was the most famous, but not the only, example of this attempt to silence unwelcome voices. There have been a number of other trials as part of a general round-up. More than 50 people have been arrested since October 1979,

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including Malva Landa, Tatyana Velikanova and other Helsinki Monitoring Group members. The arrests continued throughout April with the re-sentencing of Ukrainian nationalist V Chornovil (about to complete a three year sentence) and the detention of three other long standing human rights activists, A Lavut, M Niklus and J Dyadkin. A number of other dissidents and Jewish refuseniks have voluntarily left Moscow, or promised to do so before mid-July. Checks are still being made of houses and flats to ensure that no unregistered people are still in town. Spot checks are being made in the street of personal documents. Habitual drunks are also being removed.

7. Physical preparation of the city has proceeded apace. Many buildings of architectural merit in the city centre have been repainted: some dilapidated churches have been restored. The latter is true not only in Moscow, but also along the 'Olympic road' to the Finnish border where more than sixty years of state-inspired neglect is now being frantically repaired: towers rebuilt, domes restored, crosses placed back on top. Less exalted objects are also being spruced up: even the Moscow park benches are getting a coat of paint - from a high pressure spray which covers bench, grass, tarmac, and all. Since this is sprayed directly onto the old peeling layer it will soon fall off again - but the aim is presumably that it should last until August.

8. As far as can be judged, preparation of the sites themselves is proceeding on schedule, and the Soviet authorities say that everything will be ready on time. The Russians have made it easier for themselves by using as the main stadium one which already existed, rather than building anew. There are however doubts about the additional sports complex at Prospekt Mira, which is said to be having problems due to unexpected land subsidence.

**THIS TELEGRAM
WAS NOT
ADVANCED**

Brooke Turner

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