



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

19 February 1980

Dear Sir Denis.

Thank you for your letter dated 1 February 1980. I fully understand the difficulties faced by the International Olympic Committee and by the British Olympic Association in considering the suggestion that the Olympic Games should be moved from Moscow. Nevertheless, as you will have seen from my statement in the House of Commons on 14 February, the Government has decided that its advice to British athletes must be not to go to the Games in Moscow next summer.

We fully recognise the practical and constitutional difficulties involved in making changes to the present arrangements. We are deeply conscious of the disappointment which will be felt by British sportsmen and women who have been devoting themselves with heart, mind and body to preparations for the Games. Above all, we are conscious of the nobility of the Olympic ideal and the desirability of divorcing sport from politics. But the British Olympic Association, and the athletes whom you represent, must be aware that the decision to hold the 1980 Olympic Games in Moscow is already being presented by the Soviet Government as "convincing proof of the general acknowledgement of the historical importance and correct foreign policy of the USSR and of the huge services of the Soviet Union to peace". This is a foretaste of the way in which the Soviet Union will exploit to its advantage every aspect of the propaganda value of the Olympic Games in Moscow, and will seek to identify attendance at the Games with support for the Soviet system.

/British Athletes

British athletes have the same rights and the same responsibilities towards freedom and its maintenance as every citizen of the United Kingdom. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on a flimsy pretext and its continued military occupation of a sovereign country violates all the principles governing relations between states and peoples. Western countries are already engaged in taking a number of far-reaching measures to bring home to the USSR their sense of outrage, and the overwhelming majority of the members of the United Nations have voted for a Resolution calling for the withdrawal of the invaders. Until this happens, for British athletes to take part in games in Moscow this summer would be for them to seem to condone an international crime.

We therefore ask that the British Olympic Association should accept the advice of the Government in this matter, and reflect it in your response to the invitation of the Moscow Organising Committee to take part in the Games in Moscow this summer.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Chairmen of the Governing Bodies of the sports concerned in the summer Olympics.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Thatcher

Sir Denis Follows, C.B.E.
