



10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

22 January 1980

Dear Sir Denis,

As you will know from my statement in the House of Commons on 17 January, the Government is deeply concerned at the prospect of the Olympic Games taking place in the Soviet Union so soon after it has committed aggression against an independent country by invading Afghanistan. The invasion represented a completely new development in the history of post-war Soviet expansion. The Soviet Union acted, on the most transparent of pretexts, to establish a military hold on a sovereign country, in violation of all the principles governing relations between states and peoples. I am sure that all members of your Association will have shared the concern of the Government at the Soviet action.

The international community has condemned the Soviet move on 15 January in a Resolution calling for the withdrawal of the invaders, for which 104 states voted, an overwhelming majority of the United Nations membership.

In an ideal world, I would share entirely the philosophy of the Olympic movement that sport should be divorced from politics. Sadly, however, this is no longer a realistic view. For the Soviet Union the Olympic Games are a major political event which will be used to boost Soviet prestige in the world. It would be wrong for those people and countries which deplore aggression to co-operate in giving the Soviet Union the success it is seeking. Indeed, to do so could give the appearance of condoning what has happened in Afghanistan and could make the Soviet Union believe that aggression can be committed without cost.

/ We therefore

We therefore ask that the British Olympic Association should approach the International Olympic Committee urgently and propose that the Summer Games be moved from the Soviet Union. We believe that, with co-operation between like-minded countries, it should be possible to hold the Games in one or, if necessary, more than one other place. The Government are prepared to play a full part in supporting arrangements in this country for those parts of the Games that might be held here.

I should like to emphasise the high regard in which I hold the British sportsmen and women who have worked so hard to reach Olympic standards. I hope that it will be possible for them to participate and receive the awards they deserve this summer. The Olympic ideal is a noble one and the Games should demonstrate the free spirit of the individual in the achievement of excellence. The Soviet action in Afghanistan, however, stands in complete antithesis to the Olympic ideal. It is a challenge to us all to ensure that the Games can take place without appearing to condone Soviet military aggression.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Thatcher

Sir Denis Follows, C.B.E.