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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

7 March 1980

Dear Mr. Bedford,

Thank you for the letter which you and Mr. Johnson sent to me on 3 March enclosing a copy of one signed by 78 athletes about participation at the Olympic Games in Moscow this summer.

I note that we are agreed in our disapproval of Soviet policies. I regret that you and the 78 athletes do not agree that non-participation in the Olympic Games in Moscow is an appropriate way of demonstrating that disapproval. As I have said before, I fully recognise the dedication and hard work of British sportsmen and women who have been devoting themselves to preparations for the Games. But they 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".

You refer in your letter to a possible breach of Rule 24c of the Olympic Charter by the British Olympic Association. You will, of course, be aware that it could not be seriously suggested that the Soviet Olympic Committee is an autonomous body or free from political pressure. The Deputy Chairman of the Soviet Olympic Committee (SOC), Mr. Constantine Andrianov, is also Chairman of the Soviet Committee of Sports and Culture. Any decisions taken by the SOC would undoubtedly be in accordance with the directions of the Soviet Government. It would be naive to think otherwise. If the BOA accept the advice of the Government, it would be a free and democratic

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decision taken in a free and democratic country. I would ask you to compare the position of the SOC in the Soviet Union to the freedom rightly accorded to the BOA here.

I realise that we are asking potential competitors to take a very hard decision. But like President Carter, Chancellor Schmidt, President Moi and many other heads of Government, I firmly believe it would be wrong for sportsmen or sportswomen to participate in the Olympic Games in present circumstances. I am convinced that non-participation in the Olympic Games in Moscow remains one of the most effective ways of bringing home to the Soviet people that the action of their leaders in invading Afghanistan is unacceptable. Refusal by participants to take part in the opening and closing ceremonies or by medal winners to wait for the National Anthem would be altogether lesser gestures.

I should be grateful if you would convey this reply to all those athletes who signed the enclosure to your letter as well as those who did not do so. There is obviously still a good deal of misunderstanding which it is not always possible to clear up in correspondence. I should like you to know therefore that both Douglas Hurd and Hector Monro will be glad to discuss these matters personally with you or the other athletes who signed the enclosure to your letter. If you or others would like to take up this offer, the necessary arrangements can be made through their offices at 233 7809 (Mr. Hurd) and 212 5421 (Mr. Monro).

David Bedford, Esq.

Yours sincerely
Roger Deakin
