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TO FCO

FROM MOSCOW 160900Z

TO FCO TELNO 13 SAVING

INFO SAVING WASHINGTON UKDEL NATO

THE OLYMPICS

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Read in full

1. The run-up to the Olympics has been singularly joyless. The continuous rain has not helped. Nor has the fact that Moscow is still half-empty. Road-blocks have been set up on the access routes to prevent unauthorised cars from coming into the city, and the police have been active in looking for the slightest excuse to order cars off the road. A favourite trick has been to demand to see the hazard sign, fire extinguisher and first-aid kit supposed to be carried in every car. One driver was heard to complain bitterly about being disqualified because the iodine in his first-aid kit had dried up. The militia have however been successful in greatly reducing the amount of traffic, thereby freeing the roads for Olympic vehicles, residents and convoys of twenty or more out of town buses snaking about the city learning the tourist routes. The absence of casual Soviet visitors to Moscow (some two million a day normally come into the city from outside during the summer), the departure of most of the children, and the fact that many Muscovites have voluntarily left town have all helped to empty the streets.
2. The organisers of the Games presumably counted on thousands of tourists taking the place of those who are missing. So far they only have thousands of police. Moscow's normal complement of uniformed militia of up to 50,000 has been increased to 200,000 or more. The KGB presence has presumably also gone up in proportion. As a result, police are noticeable by their absence in a number of provincial towns, and those that are left there are, to judge by the speed with which a militiaman began cuffing gypsies at Novokuznetsk Railway Station last week, nervous lest undesirable elements take advantage of

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the fact. Other Olympic cities have been, like Moscow, heavily reinforced. There were four militiamen to a floor in Tallinn's main hotel at the beginning of the month. The Olympic Village in Moscow is even guarded by soldiers toting Kalashnikov rifles.

3. It is not obvious what the authorities are nervous about. The main purpose of the elaborate security can hardly be to confirm foreign visitors in the view that the USSR is a police state. The campaign to exile and isolate dissidents during the period of the Games has been effective so far, with few of the many journalists here finding useful copy. An elderly member of the Helsinki Monitoring Group in exile in Kazakhstan was warned recently that if "terrorist" acts were carried out during the Olympics, she would be held guilty. It may be indicative that stories are beginning to circulate here of bombs having been found; two, unexploded, at the Lenin Stadium and at a nearby Metro station, and a small one at the Cosmos Hotel which was said to have gone off some three weeks ago. It is not improbable these stories are prompted by the authorities themselves either by accident (the militia practised a "bomb evacuation" of the Lenin Stadium last week) or in an attempt to promote a suitably vigilant attitude on the part of the Soviet population. The latter have been given frequent warnings of the dangers from foreign agents, including a long TV documentary on 6 July entitled "Lies and Hate" on the CIA, Zionists, neo-fascists, nationalists and dissidents. The authorities must also hope that the display of force they have arranged will deter both dissidents and visitors from exploiting the Games to publicise Human Rights issues. They have already tried to stop a broadcast on West German TV of pretty innocuous street interviews with ordinary Soviet citizens on the grounds it was 'political' rather than sporting, and will not like the fact that

many Western newspapers have sent political rather than sporting journalists to cover the Games. They ought to be able to prevent the direct television transmission of any incidents at the Games themselves through their control of TV coverage of the events, but will not be able to stop photographers recording any such instances for their newspapers. It is noticeable that criticism of Western, and especially US, human rights policies and records has recently begun to increase, probably because attack helps defence. Literaturnaya Gazeta today included an approving reminder the Russians may later regret of the action of a black American who won a gold medal at Montreal and turned his back on the US Flag at the presentation ceremony.

4. The Soviet authorities remain heavy-handed in their approach to the foreign journalists one might assume they would wish to flatter. Most Western agencies and newspapers have had problems in getting visas, largely because of bureaucratic muddle. Journalists here are irritated by the security arrangements, and the repeated need to get special passes. It takes some 40 minutes to get into the Cosmos Hotel for a meal with a friend, so many forms need to be filled in. At least two groups of Western journalists have had well-connected Soviet "helpers" wished upon them. Others, too, have had their problems: the Dutch team were subjected to a detailed search on arrival because border guard dogs started sniffing suspiciously at a container on their aeroplane; the Director of the Dutch National Olympic Committee was irritated to be interrupted by a plain-clothes policeman while entertaining his Belgian colleague at the Olympic village and to be told it was late, and time his visitor left; and the Australian team manager was furious at favourable words put into his mouth by TASS. There are bound to be more such irritants as the bureaucracy - and the KGB - try to cope with unfamiliar problems.

5. The facilities for the Games themselves, and for the athletes and journalists, have been finished on time. By Soviet standards, and by

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most others, they seem to have been well done. 2,583 athletes from 68 countries had arrived by 15 July. The Secretary of the British Olympic Association that day had himself photographed calling at the Embassy to ask for our telephone number in case consular assistance was required. The International Olympic Committee held an open session at the Bolshoi on 14 July, addressed by the Chairman of the Soviet Committee, by Kuznetsov, deputy Chairman of the Presidium, and Lord Killanin. Pavlov and Kuznetsov stressed the need to defend the Olympic movement and praised Killanin for doing so. The latter was quoted by Pravda as regretting that many athletes were absent because of "political diktat" or the prompting of their own consciences. A way would have to be found to enable sportsmen to participate in the Olympics as individuals and to free them from the power of sports organisers. Pravda did not quote Killanin's view that there had long been too much chauvinism and flag-waving about the Olympics.

6. Few tourists seem so far to have arrived. The authorities apparently felt it necessary to discourage travel well ahead of the Olympics, and will have lost useful sums of hard currency as a result. The numbers of Western visitors now expected during the Games themselves is only a small proportion of those the Russians originally catered for. Depending on their circumstances, Soviet citizens can now get discounts of between 10% and 90% on production of the appropriate piece of paper. Thus a ticket for rowing at Krylatskoye can now be had for 60 kopecks as opposed to a minimum printed price of 5 Roubles.

7. Although the Games themselves may attract popular interest, there is therefore no sign of excitement here in anticipation. Regret, rather than anger, has been expressed to Embassy travellers about the boycott, and even

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Soviet officials make little effort to hide their view that the Games will be far less appealing because of non-participation by the Americans and others. Though Moscow shops are somewhat better stocked than usual, and there is plenty of good food available to foreign visitors, the bonanza every Soviet citizen firmly believed would accompany the Olympics has yet to occur. Perhaps the fact of their belief was more important than whether or not it was true, and expressed an expectation that everything possible would be done to impress "them", if necessary at "our" expense. In Leningrad, the mood has been summed up by the wry comment: "We survived the Blackade, we'll survive the Olympics." In Moscow, the story of Brezhnev's visit to a barber is going the rounds. The barber asks him: "Tell me, Leonid Ilych, what will happen after the Olympics?" There is no answer, so he puts the question a second time. Silence again. The third time he asks, the KGB body-guard rises and says to him: "Leave him alone. Can't you see he doesn't want to answer?" The barber replies: "I don't want an answer. But his hair is easier to cut when it stands on end."

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BY BAG

FROM MOSCOW 020900Z

TO FCO TELNO 11 SAVING

INFO SAVING TO WASHINGTON, UKDEL NATO

OUR TELNOS 9 AND 10 SAVING: PREPARATIONS FOR THE OLYMPICS

*Read in full
(I have a specimen of the bear
with a pilot - see last sentence)*

1. Moscow is increasingly taking on the air of a city about to face an onslaught. Large numbers of militia men have been drafted in and foot patrols around the city have been very greatly increased. Squads of KGB internal security troops have also been seen and convoys of army lorries (some decorated with the Olympic symbol) are a regular sight. As the Olympic torch approaches through Bulgaria and Romania preparations are being made to man the route with police or soldiers, the better to protect what Soviet television frequently describes as the flame of peace.
2. Resident and visiting journalists are finding the security measures being taken at the Olympic sites and their hotels a considerable problem. It is one which may well increase when more substantial numbers of press men arrive. Journalists trying to gain access to the new Press Centre have been held up by lengthy checks, both on entry and on leaving the building and have been given to understand that the security question was taken out of the hands of the Organising Committee by the KGB as a result of high level instructions. The effect is not only to segregate visiting journalists from the Soviet public but also to make for some times ludicrous administrative problems. Foreigners living at the National Hotel, for example, were left without mail for 10 days because the postman was not allowed into the hotel and because they were not permitted to go to the post office to collect it. Resident correspondents have been unable to call on the NBC team now installed at the Cosmos Hotel

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because no one will issue them with the right passes. That hotel is especially heavily guarded with a policeman on each floor - though this may also have something to do with the fact that most of the French cutlery and other equipment with which the hotel was equipped when recently opened has disappeared for resale on the black market. The Rank Xerox service team have so far been denied access to their machines installed in Olympic buildings because they too do not have the correct documents.

3. Soviet Army personnel will also have a significant role to play at the Games themselves. At the opening of the Olympic Village last weekend the Olympic flag was carried in by a dozen members of the Soviet Armed Forces marching in goose step. The ceremony at Tallinn was carried out by sailors in less emotive style. Troops have been rehearsed in cheering for the Opening Ceremony and have practiced to make up a living ladder for the Olympic runner to ascend when he lights the flame on 19 July.

4. The oppressive feeling of the city is increased by the virtual absence of children. Many parents must resent what amounts to compulsory deportation for the best part of two and a half months. There is also a decline in the number of cars on the roads. New regulations will be introduced from 10 July which will in effect ban movement for those without privileged numberplates. It is perhaps not surprising that some cynicism has been expressed by ordinary Soviet citizens about the Games and guides showing their compatriots over the Olympic wonders have on occasion had a hard time selling their wares as being for the benefit of ordinary citizens.

5. Dissidents and believers continue to be the victims of the Olympic purge. The Orthodox priest Dmitri Dudko, in detention since January on charges of anti-Soviet propaganda, was forced to make a public confession

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on television on 20 June in which he referred to foreign interference and the Olympics. The trade unionist Vladimir Borisov, member of SMOT (Free Inter-Professional Association of Workers), was expelled from the Soviet Union on 22 June, leaving his wife and young daughter in Moscow. Alexander Podrabinek, in exile for publicising allegations of psychiatric abuse, is expected to be tried a second time, in Yakutsk, on charges of anti-Soviet slander based on material written in Siberian exile. Soviet Pentecostals have written an open letter to President Carter alleging that they are being forced out of the five Olympic cities before the Games begin.

6. The first teams have now arrived though there are not yet substantial numbers of athletes or visitors in Moscow. We have been told in confidence by the Dutch Embassy that all 170 Israelis who wanted to come to Moscow as tourists have had their visas refused or in some cases cancelled. A UK citizen working temporarily as a translator for Progress Publishers has told us in confidence that she has already translated a number of articles to appear in Soviet post-Olympic magazines containing statistical details (with the numbers filled in) dealing with such things as the number of visitors to Moscow during the Olympics, the numbers of special buses and trains and even the tonnes of ice-cream consumed.

7. The expected large quantities of consumer goods and food have yet to appear, but stores in the centre of Moscow and in the suburbs are well stocked with their normal range of goods, and some shops are selling a few luxury items in quantities possibly greater than normal (eg foreign dresses, pullovers and jeans) for which there are the usual enormous queues.

Supplies of some luxury foodstuffs seem marginally better than normal but very little good quality meat is available in the Soviet food shops apart

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from imported chicken and turkey. The general impression is that while shops have not so far been given high quality goods which are not usually available, even in the outer regions of Moscow they do have slightly better supplies than usual of their normal range of goods, including clothing and consumer items such as cameras and electric razors.

8. The Soviet press, describing the arrival of the Olympic torch in Sofia referred to Mishka bear as having become something of a talisman in Bulgaria. His vacuous grin is certainly increasingly evident in Moscow with Mishka bear on posters, on the television and a large number of Olympic souvenirs. If you have the best part of £100 to spare you may buy a Mishka bear made out of cowhide. Those not prepared to spend quite so much can buy perfume in plastic Mishka bear flasks, woolly Mishkas, china Mishkas with flowers or badges with the bear engaged in various sports. The badge with the bear holding a pistol seems to have been withdrawn from sale.

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