

The British Olympic Association

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To Members of Parliament
House of Commons
London SW1.

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14 March 1980

Dear Member,

I am enclosing, for your information, a statement from the British Olympic Association in respect of the forthcoming Olympic Games in Moscow.

It is hoped that the statement will clarify some apparent misconceptions which have intruded into the debate on our participation in Moscow and generally summarises the situation as we see it.

Yours sincerely,

R.W. Palmer
General Secretary

If you require further information, the BOA's private line numbers are:

408.2100	408.2055	408.2072	408.2015	408.2081
	493.5745		493.5446	

THE MOSCOW OLYMPICS

A STATEMENT FROM THE BRITISH OLYMPIC ASSOCIATION

TO MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT

BRITAIN'S ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT

The Olympic Charter states that:

"National Olympic Committees must be autonomous and must resist all pressures of any kind whatsoever, whether of a political, religious or economic nature. In pursuing their objectives, the NOCs may co-operate with private and government organisations. However, they must never associate themselves with any undertaking which would be in conflict with the principles of the Olympic movement and with the rules of the International Olympic Committee."

The principles of the Olympic movement are:

"To promote the development of those physical and moral qualities which are the basis of sport.

"To educate young people through sport in a spirit of better understanding between each other and of friendship, thereby helping to build a better and more peaceful world.

"To spread the Olympic principles throughout the world, thereby creating international goodwill.

"To bring together the athletes of the world in the great four-yearly sport festival, the Olympic Games."

The principles of the British Olympic Association are:

"To encourage interest in the Olympic Games and to foster the aims and ideals of the Olympic Movement throughout Great Britain in accordance with the principles and rules of the IOC.

"To organise and co-ordinate British participation in the Olympic Games."

According to the International Olympic Committee's recently declared position and the IOC charter, the Moscow Olympic Organising Committee is in good standing.

The IOC have refused to move, delay or abandon the Moscow Olympics and they alone - and not governments - are the only authority over the Games.

The British Olympic Association, as a member of the IOC, is obliged to support the Games. If, because of political pressures, the BOA do not accept the invitation to compete in Moscow, the Association is contravening the rules of the IOC under which Britain became a member.

ALTERNATIVE "GAMES" OR SPORTS FESTIVAL

The Olympic Games is the world's only true multi-sport festival and its strength is that it is independent and above governments and politics.

No other event, not even World championships, can approach the Olympics in prestige for competitors.

It is not possible for any group of nations, any group of National Olympic Committees or any other organisation than the International Olympic Committee to organise an alternative "Games".

It is equally impossible for a substitute sporting festival, as suggested by President Carter and others, to take place. The 21 sports in the summer Games are controlled by International Federations. In their support of the IOC they will not grant the necessary permits for an alternative event during the Games - the International Amateur Athletic Federation, whose sport is the corner-stone of the Olympic programme, have already said so.

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS AND THE RULE OF LAW

The democratic right of the people of the United Kingdom, and the avowed policy of the present Government, is the defence of the freedom of the individual.

The Government has demonstrated its belief in this right by the refusal to take steps to ban the British Lions tour of South Africa even though the action of the Rugby Unions is in contravention of the Gleneagles agreement by Commonwealth governments to break all sporting contacts with countries who practice apartheid in sport.

Yet the Government are now using sport as a political weapon without the Rule of Law to support their position.

The Government are demanding that Olympic athletes should not go to Moscow yet are taking no steps to prevent Russian competitors coming to Britain nor stopping trade or cultural delegations or diplomats from travelling between the Soviet Union and Britain (and vice versa).

The British Olympic Association are obliged to enter competitors whose national sports federations wish to participate in the Olympics, unless the law of the land says they may not. And the law of the land does not say this.

The democratic desire of British competitors to be present at the Olympics this summer does not condone Russian action in Afghanistan any more than does the presence of the British Ambassador in Moscow.

SUPPORT FOR A BOYCOTT

The number of National Olympic Committees who advocate a boycott has been grossly exaggerated. Of the 142 NOCs recognised by the IOC only a handful have indicated their support. Excluded from this number is Saudi Arabia, who stated last October that they would not participate but, nevertheless, wished the Moscow Games every success.

FINANCE

The financial involvement of the Government (ie the spending of public money) to send the British team to Moscow has been consistently misrepresented. In fact, public money (through the Sports Council) has been given only once in the last six Olympics. The amount was just £15,000 in respect of the 1976 summer Games in Montreal.

Conversely, the BOA's £1,000,000 appeal for the winter and summer Olympics of 1980 includes a reserve of the order of £300,000 for the payment to the Government of corporation and other taxes.

The Government's decision to withhold public funds (ie Sports Council grants) in respect of participation costs for the Moscow Games will not prevent British competitors from going to the Olympics. In recent years, the British Olympic Association has raised sufficient money to pay every single expense for the participation of the British team. But this was not always so. It is not impossible that the chosen competitors, in defence of their opposition to a government-imposed boycott, will set about finding their own costs of participation. The International Athletes Club have already said they will do this for their sport.

SPORT IN BRITAIN

If a boycott of the Games succeeds, it will destroy the Olympic movement and the fabric of international sport and domestic sport could not remain unaffected.

Many of the sports in the Olympic programme were developed internationally by Great Britain and the influence of British administrators and technical experts has been immense. If there is a Moscow boycott, it will be very difficult for British representatives on the committees of the International Sports Federations to maintain their important positions in the councils of world sport. The long-term effects, should this happen, cannot be ignored or treated lightly.

London 14 March 1980