



From the
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

We shall look

very silly if we

give permission for these

charter flights

to Aeroflot.

Government should

on the Olympics

number

consistent

DEPARTMENT OF TRADE
1 VICTORIA STREET
LONDON SW1H 0ET

TELEPHONE DIRECT LINE 01 215 3781
SWITCHBOARD 01 215 7877

Prime Minister

27/6

CONFIDENTIAL

The Hon Douglas Hurd CBE MP
Minister of State
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Downing Street
London SW1A 2AL

27th June 1980

D Douglas.

CHARTER FLIGHTS FOR THE OLYMPIC GAMES

This morning Aeroflot sought the approval of my Department to operate 18 special charter services between London and Moscow to carry visitors to the Olympic Games. The question arises what attitude we should adopt towards these charter flights. I do not think that I should allow matters to proceed on their normal course without consulting you.

Aeroflot need the approval of my Department in order to operate charter services. Normally we approve charter flights on the basis of broad reciprocity. Although British Airways are not proceeding with their own charter flights for the Olympics, there are other programmes of British charter flights to Moscow. On general civil aviation policy grounds we would prefer not to refuse the applications from Aeroflot, but we have the means to do so.

As you know, we try to prevent politics from intruding into civil aviation, because it is an obvious ready target and our own considerable interests would be vulnerable to counter-action by others. In the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, civil aviation is being treated in the same way as commercially justified trade and excluded from the areas in which action is being taken. Thus scheduled services by Aeroflot and British Airways and the former's normal charter programme for tourists are continuing undisturbed.

We also need to keep in mind that the Government has not gone further than to express the hope that UK citizens will not want the Olympic Games. Given the close proximity of the Olympics, the assumption must be that the tour organiser, David Dryer Sports Travel, already has bookings for a major part of the capacity



envisaged. We know that these tours cost £400 per person and that a 25% non-refundable deposit is required at the time of booking.

The charter flights are however a potential source of sharp criticism for the Government, and no doubt whichever decision we take there will be no lack of critics and advocates of the opposite course.

I should add that, after discussion with Aeroflot, British Airways considered the possibility of operating 6 charter flights themselves, on behalf of their subsidiary, British Air Tours. I spoke to BA's Chief Executive about this and he told me that they had already decided not to go ahead with a contract with Mr Dryer. This is the decision which has attracted some notice in today's papers.

I think we need to take a decision fairly quickly and should be glad if you would let me have a response as soon as possible.

I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister, Chief Whip, members of MISC 39 and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Norman
Norman

NORMAN TEBBIT

c.c. PS/BOS
PS/MFT
PS/Sec
Mr Cairnes
Mr Steele
Mr Dick
Mr Roberts
Mr Eagers
Mr Garrod
-
Prime Minister
Chief Whip
Members of MISC 39
Sir Robert Armstrong

