

CONFIDENTIAL

THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

OD(80)27

COPY NO 42

14 March 1980

CABINET
DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY COMMITTEE

OLYMPIC GAMES

Memorandum by the Secretary of State
for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

The Committee agreed on 21 February (OD(80) 5th Meeting) that the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Mr Hurd, should chair a Ministerial group to coordinate the implementation of the Government's policy on non-participation in the Moscow Olympics. I attach a progress report by Mr Hurd. At the Committee's proposed meeting on 19 March he will supplement this with an oral report on the intergovernmental meeting of the 'ad hoc Olympic steering group' which he is attending on 17/18 March.

C

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

14 March 1980

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

NOTE BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MINISTERIAL GROUP ON THE OLYMPIC GAMES

1. This interim report aims to set in perspective developments so far at a moment when events are moving rapidly.
2. The first aspect of the Group's work was to ensure that the Government's policy was applied fully by those for whom we have a direct responsibility to give instructions or advice. The necessary action has been taken to that end, and has attracted much publicity. It has also evoked strong reactions from, in particular, the British Olympic Association (BOA), who have criticised the decisions to withdraw the British Olympic attaché and to forbid the granting of special paid leave for members of the Civil Service and Armed Services selected to go to Moscow. These decisions were a logical consequence of the previous decision to advise a boycott.
3. The second aspect was to make known the Government's views and the reasons for them as widely as possible, and in particular to the principal sports organisations concerned with the Olympics. The BOA did in the event postpone until 25 March acceptance of the Moscow Organising Committee's invitation - even though the majority of members were strongly in favour of accepting; but their spokesmen have shown increasing confusion and defensiveness in explaining their continued intention to go to Moscow. Symptomatic of this confusion was Sir Denis Follows's statement that the BOA would be influenced by a Parliamentary vote, which in effect he retracted as soon as he learned that Parliament would indeed be debating the issue. There has been an apparent hardening of opinion against a boycott among the competitors themselves, and this will probably influence the sporting organisations.
4. The third aspect of the Group's work was to assess the position of other governments and National Olympic Committees and, in consultation with friendly governments, explore the possibility of alternative games. A major complicating factor here is that governments cannot themselves organise the games; they need the goodwill and cooperation of the national governing bodies of the various sports involved and, in most cases, the constitutional

/approval of

CONFIDENTIAL

approval of the International Federations governing each sport. There has so far been little spontaneous interest here among competitors or sporting organisations in the idea of alternative games. I am attending an intergovernmental meeting in Geneva on 17-18 March at which our aim, and that of other key participants such as Australia and the United States, will be to establish what alternative games it would be feasible to hold and where; whether a significant number of national sporting bodies are willing to organise them; and whether the relevant International Federations are prepared to agree. Crucial to the success of this approach are the attitudes of the United States Olympic Committee, who have yet formally to decide not to go to Moscow, and of the International Amateur Athletic Federation (IAAF), responsible for the track and field events which are the Olympics' biggest attraction. The IAAF have refused to approve international games which coincide with the Moscow Olympics, but do not appear to have ruled out games which would follow Moscow. The latter is what the Americans propose. They have in mind games which would be distributed widely between cities in different continents, but which would take place within a short time-space in August/September (the Moscow Games take place in the second half of July). Our own approach is identical, and there are reasonable prospects of holding at least three competitions in the United Kingdom: diving, rowing and the equestrian events. It will be important that decisions be taken soon, in order to allow travel and tourist organisations to plan and publicise the arrangements for spectators. The Geneva meeting cannot itself take these decisions. It can hope to produce a set of suggestions for competitions in different places, sport by sport, which governments could put to sporting organisations and offer to facilitate. Cabinet have agreed (CC(80) 9th conclusions, minute 6) to the expenditure, if necessary, of up to £500,000 from the contingency reserve for this purpose.

5. Progress at the meeting on 17-18 March will strengthen the hand of the Minister for Sport, who is due to attend a meeting of his West European colleagues on 20/21 March in the framework of the Council of Europe. This meeting, to which representatives of the International Olympic Committees and the International Sports Federations have been invited, is informal; but it will reflect and perhaps help determine what is the consensus of West European

/opinion

opinion on attendance at the Moscow Olympics. Much depends on the attitude of the West Germans. The BOA have said that they will take their own decision on 25 March following a meeting of a number of European National Olympic Committees in Brussels on 22 March.

6. To sum up

- (i) the Government's views have been pressed home but there is evidence of some hardening of attitudes within sporting bodies and among competitors;
- (ii) many other governments share our views, and no Western Olympic Committee, even though some have expressed the intention of going to Moscow, has yet accepted its invitation to send a team to Moscow;
- (iii) meetings in the next fortnight are likely to be critical to the prospects for the successful organisation of alternative games, to be distributed among various countries, including the United Kingdom, after the Moscow Olympics;
- (iv) at present it seems likely that the BOA will accept the invitation from Moscow on 25 March. This will not be binding on individual sporting organisations or competitors. The prospects for an extensive boycott by UK competitors may depend in part on the outcome of (iii), but even more on the decisions of US and German competitors.