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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

4 February 1980

Visit of Mr. Fraser: Olympic Games

As you know, the Prime Minister entertained the Australian Prime Minister, Mr. Fraser, to lunch today. The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, Sir Michael Palliser, Sir Frank Cooper, and Mr. Cortazzi attended the lunch on our side, Mr. MacKellar, Sir G. Yeend, Mr. Henderson, Mr. Pritchett and Mr. Fernandez on the Australian side. Much of the discussion was taken up with the Olympic Games.

The Prime Minister explained the position of the British Government about participation in the Olympic Games. She said that she fully supported President Carter in this matter. She stressed, however that she was not prepared to take Government action to force athletes to absent themselves from Moscow. Mr. Fraser said that his position was identical with the Prime Minister's. However, he was very concerned about the situation that would arise if the clearly expressed views of governments were ignored by athletes and athletic organisations. The Soviet Government would have a major propaganda opportunity if significant numbers of athletes appeared in Moscow in defiance of their governments' advice. A Soviet handbook which Mr. Fraser had seen had made very clear the manner in which the presence of athletes in Moscow would be exploited by the Soviet Government.

Against this background, Mr. Fraser argued that more planning and co-ordination was required on the part of governments. Although he agreed with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary that the situation was at present moving in favour of Western governments, it could not simply be allowed to drift. Things had to be pulled together. In particular an alternative site should be selected and announced as soon as possible. This could be done in advance of the International Olympic Committee's decision as to whether or not the venue of the Olympiad would be changed. If they decided that the venue should not be changed, the alternative site would be used for a competing sports festival which would not however be an Olympic Games.

The mere selection of an alternative site would, of course, put pressure on the IOC. It would also give a lead to athletes who were hesitating since it would guarantee them an opportunity to compete and to ensure that their training was not wasted.

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The longer the delay before a decision was taken, the more difficult it would be to organise any alternative. A decision in May, which was what Lord Killanin now appeared to be advocating, would be far too late. There was no need, in Mr. Fraser's view, to wait until the month's notice given by President Carter had elapsed before beginning the preparations for the choice of an alternative.

The above analysis was generally accepted. There was some discussion of alternative sites. It became clear that Melbourne, where there is at present no running track, and Mexico, which was unlikely to be popular with the athletes, looked less promising than Montreal and Los Angeles. Of the latter two sites, Montreal was preferred on the grounds that it would be less confrontational if the alternative site were elsewhere than in the United States. It was noted that either Montreal or Los Angeles would offer the possibility of using ships as temporary accommodation for the athletes.

It was agreed that a meeting should take place this afternoon of British, Australian and American representatives (if possible Mr. Cutler) to carry the discussion further. The first task might be to draft a message from the Prime Minister and Mr. Fraser to the Canadian Prime Minister asking formally about the availability of Montreal (the assumption was that Mr. Clark would discuss the matter with Mr. Trudeau before replying). It was also agreed that there would be much to be said for an early meeting of representatives of all those governments that had already expressed doubts about going to Moscow. Before such a meeting, which would have to include sports administrators, assembled, an agenda would have to be prepared. This might necessitate the setting up of a steering group. Mr. Fraser said that Australia would be prepared to participate in such a group. Both the Prime Minister and Mr. Fraser recognised that if the idea of an alternative international games was to be pursued, not inconsiderable sums of money would be involved.

Two subsidiary points may be worth noting:

- a. Mr. Fraser said that he favoured the establishment of a permanent site for the Olympic Games in Greece; and
- b. Attention was drawn to the need for a policy to be laid down about the participation of Civil Servants and members of the Armed Forces in the Olympic Games.

I am sending copies of this letter to Geoffrey Needham (Department of the Environment), Brian Norbury (Ministry of Defence), John Wiggins (HM Treasury) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Richard Alexander

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