



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

4 February 1980

Dear Geoff

As you know, Mr. Monro was present today when the Prime Minister met delegations from the Central Council for Physical Recreation and the Sports Council to discuss the Moscow Olympics.

I enclose a copy of a prepared statement which Mrs. Glen Haig read at the beginning of the meeting.

The CCPR delegation appeared to be taking verbatim shorthand notes of the meeting, and fairly detailed quotations may therefore start to appear in the media. No decisions emerged from the meeting but it did help to clarify several issues.

The Prime Minister stressed that there was no question of compulsion, but that the Government was raising a serious issue and asking the sports bodies, and the British Olympic Association, to consider this carefully before final decisions were taken internationally about the Moscow Olympics, and before final advice was offered by the governing bodies of British sport to the athletes who might be selected for the Olympics. She made it clear that the Government had not taken any decision about possible financial sanctions as far as sporting bodies were concerned. She emphasised that the only firm decision taken by the Government on the matter was that there was no question of using visa or passport controls as a means of stopping British athletes from going to Moscow.

The CCPR delegation stressed the limited room for manoeuvre which existed in the Olympic rules. In their view, the only viable possibility for action would lie in establishing major international fixtures in a number of sports which would offer adequate substitutes this year for those international athletes who chose not to attend the Moscow games. This, it was stressed, would be expensive, and the possibility of Government financial support would be a critical factor.

The CCPR delegation stressed the divisions among sportsmen on the issue; the dilemma for young athletes who might be left to reach a personal political decision about participation; and their reluctance to become involved in futile political gestures which could destroy Britain's influence in international sport.

/ But they

*File Sport
cc Cabinet Office*

but

But they made it clear that they were prepared to consider carefully ways in which Britain could play a part in concerted international action, and that they respected the strength of Government feeling, even if there were some personal divisions in the CCPR delegation about how far they could meet the Government on action in relation to the Olympics.

Mr. Jeeps of the Sports Council drew attention to the Memorandum of Understanding between the UK and the USSR, drawn up in the time of the last administration. He pointed out that this had not been implemented, and could provide a possible sanction for the UK.

The CCPR delegation pressed for the right to a further meeting with the Prime Minister, and asked the Prime Minister to attend their AGM on 25 March. The Prime Minister declined the latter (which falls on the same date as the enthronement of the Archbishop of Canterbury) and asked the CCPR and the Sports Council to pursue these matters further with your Minister.

I am sending a copy of this letter and enclosure to David Edmonds (Department of the Environment), and Paul Lever (Foreign and Commonwealth Office).

M. A. PATTISON

Geoffrey Needham, Esq.,
Department of the Environment.

see Minutes Sports

MEETING BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE DELEGATION FROM
THE CENTRAL COUNCIL OF PHYSICAL RECREATION, HELD AT
10 DOWNING STREET AT 1115 HOURS ON MONDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 1980

Present:

Prime Minister
Minister of State,
Department of the Environment,
Mr. Hector Monro
Mr. Michael Alexander
Mr. Mike Pattison
Mr. Charles Anson

Mrs. Mary Glen Haig,
Chairman of the Executive
Committee of the CCPR
Mr. Norman Sarsfield,
Vice Chairman of the Executive
Committee of the CCPR
Mr. Keith Mitchell,
Executive Member of the CCPR
Mr. Peter Lawson,
General Secretary of the CCPR
Miss Jalna Wilmott,
CCPR Secretary
Mr. Emlyn Jones
Mr. Dickie Jeeps

* * * * *

After the Prime Minister's welcoming comments, Mrs. Glen Haig read a prepared statement on behalf of the CCPR.

The Prime Minister said that she had not, of course, had an opportunity to see the statement in advance, and had no prepared reply. But she detected a fundamental contradiction in the statement which spoke of the impossibility of splitting the Games but the possibility of moving them. Mrs. Glen Haig pointed out that Rule 54 provided for postponement, not cancellation. Rule 53 allowed the Games to be spread around the country when awarded to a city in that country. The Prime Minister emphasised that it was not for her to interpret the rules. The delegation had explained that the rules were made by the International Olympic Committee. The IOC could therefore presumably change the rules. Mrs. Glen Haig stressed

/ that a decision

that a decision on venue, once taken, was final. The Prime Minister said that she, as an individual citizen, had freedom to express to her Olympic Committee her wish to avoid a repetition of the 1936 experience. Any other citizen, including athletes, had the same opportunity. Public opinion was running strongly against the Russians, and some athletes were quoted as sharing this view. It seemed that around 40 countries were seriously concerned at the prospect of the Moscow Olympics.

The Prime Minister stressed that individuals and the Government could ask the British Olympic Association to re-examine the question. A decision rested with the Association. The responsibility would be theirs. She could not compel athletes not to go to Moscow. She appreciated the tremendous efforts that had gone into preparation both for athletes and officials. The decision was not for Government, but the British Government - like other governments - had asked their national Olympic Committee to consider the position. She wished to make it absolutely clear that there was no way which she would use passport or visa control to stop athletes travelling to Moscow. This would be just the type of oppression which was characteristic of the country she hoped British athletes would choose not to travel to.

Mr. Lawson said that the collective advice of the sporting administrators was that a dispersed Games was not practical. Mr. Sarsfield said that the Prime Minister had greatly reassured the delegation over any threat that the Government would use compulsion to prevent athletes travelling to Moscow. Mr. Lawson added that many potential British Olympic sportsmen were very young. The Government was asking them to make a political decision, which created a tremendous dilemma. The Prime Minister responded that sports officials also had a responsibility to advise. This was part of the responsibilities of democracy.

Mr. Sarsfield, quoting his experience of the Olympics dating back to 1948, was convinced that there was no way which

the venue and arrangements for the 1980 Olympics could be changed. The issue was therefore one of advice to British athletes on participation. The Prime Minister said that if this was the case then she would have to consider, in the light of all relevant factors, what advice the Government would give. Mrs. Glen Haig referred to a referendum amongst athletes on the subject. Despite the tradition of weak response to questionnaires, she had received 94 replies within 48 hours, and these were split 47-47.

Mr. Sarsfield said that, if the Olympics could not be moved, there was an option to setting up alternative international fixtures for individual sports and that any such arrangements would have to provide for competition within the same timescale as that to which the sportsmen were already preparing. He asked whether the Government would offer financial help with the considerable expense of making such arrangements. The Prime Minister said that this idea had not yet been considered. The Government's first reaction had been to explore the possibility of a move. This was why she had drawn attention to those sports where British facilities could provide an appropriate venue. Mrs. Glen Haig said that arrangements for alternative international meetings were a possible way out of the situation. But this would almost certainly be the end of the Olympic movement. The Prime Minister did not accept that there would be full participation in the Moscow Olympics. Many of the younger athletes who were still strongly in favour of going to Moscow might be basing their views on the expectation of a full Olympics. Nor did she accept that action in respect of Moscow would signal the end of the Olympics. She asked whether there was not a clause in the Olympic rules which barred the participation of a country which was in conflict with another. Mr. Sarsfield confirmed this.

Mr. Lawson pointed to a fundamental dilemma. The rules required that national Olympic Associations must be completely free of political pressure. The Prime Minister asked when

defence of freedom had become a political issue. The Olympics in Moscow would be used for political purposes. Mr. Mitchell said that every country hosting the Olympics used it in effect for a political statement about its system of Government. Mrs. Glen Haig asked whether the Prime Minister considered that the political exploitation of the Games was a new development. Mr. Sarsfield said that the Sports Council were underwriting the Olympic appeal.

He asked whether the final decision of the sports bodies about the Olympics might lead to a withdrawal of this arrangement. The Prime Minister confirmed that, despite Press reports, the Government had reached no decision on any such matters. The only clear Government decision had been to exclude use of visa or passport control as a sanction. Mr. Sarsfield said that the sports bodies needed to be able to look ahead to the issues both of Government help for staging alternative international meetings, and for Government help to underwrite the Olympic appeal shortfall. Mr. Monro said that these matters had to be approached one step at a time. He asked whether the British Olympic Association had called together its constituent members in order to form a representative view for the discussions which would take place at Lake Placid. This would be a reasonable response to the Government's request. Mrs. Glen Haig recalled about 30 nations had boycotted the Montreal Games. Since then Rule 35 had been revised to state that withdrawal without liability was acceptable up to eight weeks before the Games. At present, there was a great deal of uncertainty. Even the American position had been thrown into confusion by reports that Mohammed Ali was having doubts about his own mission. The Prime Minister reiterated that matters rested with the national Olympic Committees. It was not only a question of considering Mr. Carter's approach but also of considering the arguments put to them. There were strong views from many sources, including many athletes who had competed in the 1936 Olympics. Mrs. Glen Haig asked whether the Prime Minister believed that Germany would have changed its course of action in the face of an Olympic boycott. The Prime Minister said that there were a great many uncertainties but history showed

/ that the world

that the world had appeared to condone what the Nazi regime stood for. Mrs. Glen Haig recalled that in 1936 she had fenced against Hungarians and Russians in Melbourne regardless of events in Hungary. The Prime Minister stressed that this was no parallel with the present situation of a host country guilty of aggression against an independent state. A closer parallel was when the games were removed from Tokyo after Japan invaded Manchuria in 1937. Mrs. Glen Haig's argument seemed to be that in spite of the enormity of the Russian reaction the sporting world would go on regardless.

Mr. Lawson said that he personally favoured the idea of moving the games from Moscow. There were clearly enormous practical problems. For the British sporting world to stand out against the Moscow Olympics could destroy the role and status of our sportsmen and our sports administration if this was seen as an isolated token response. He would be ready to join in a realistic effort which could be expected to have a worthwhile result. The Prime Minister emphasised that the Government, with like-minded countries, was looking at a whole range of possibilities to demonstrate revulsion at the Russian reaction.

Mr. Sarsfield said that when the time came for the CCPR to provide definitive advice to British athletes, the Council would like the opportunity of further consultation with the Prime Minister. Other issues might arise, such as the risk that the Soviet Union might refuse visas to enable administrators to take part in international meetings due to follow the Olympics. Mr. Jeeps drew attention to the Memorandum of Understanding between the UK and the USSR drawn up by the previous administration. This could certainly offer a sanction: it had never been implemented for sport. The Prime Minister took note of this suggestion. She asked the CCPR and the Sports Council to pursue all these matters further with Mr. Monro.

/ In concluding

In concluding, Mrs. Glen Haig told the Prime Minister that the CCPR annual general meeting would take place on 25 March and the CCPR would be delighted to provide a platform for the Prime Minister to pursue these topics. The Prime Minister thanked Mrs. Glen Haig for the offer but recalled that she had already accepted an invitation to attend the enthronement of the Archbishop of Canterbury on that date.

MAD

4 February 1980

THE CENTRAL COUNCIL OF PHYSICAL RECREATION

OBSERVATIONS MADE TO THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RT HON MARGARET THATCHER MP, BY MRS MARY GLEN HAIG, CHAIRMAN OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CENTRAL COUNCIL OF PHYSICAL RECREATION

Monday 4 February 1980

- 1) The CCPR and its members share the Government's concern over the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the implications for the future of world peace.
- 2) British sport wishes in no way to undermine the efforts of the Government to bring to the attention of the Soviet Union the seriousness with which their recent invasion of Afghanistan is viewed by the British people.
- 3) British sport, however, regrets being used as a front line weapon of response when it feels that the Government has recourse to other tougher economic and diplomatic measures to indicate to any Government its disapproval of an action or series of actions.

This regret is compounded when Government takes action on behalf of sport, for example, in concluding the Gleneagles Agreement, the UK/USSR Sports Agreement and determining representation on the Council of Europe for sport, without any prior consultation with the organisations most affected by such decisions.

- 4) The facts of the present situation are:-
 - (a) The decision to stage the Olympic Games in Moscow is a decision of the IOC and is not the responsibility of the British Olympic Association.

- (b) Any question of a change of venue of the Games is a matter for the IOC itself and it is impossible, having regard to rule 54 of the IOC Charter, even should the IOC agree to change the venue, that consideration would be given to splitting the Games and sharing the venues with various countries.
- (c) The BOA, having received an invitation to attend the Olympic Games in Moscow, have until May 1980 to reply to that invitation.
- (d) The BOA consists of 26 Governing Bodies of sport and any decision to accept or reject the invitation is the sole prerogative of the BOA itself.
- (e) Should the BOA decide to accept the invitation to send a team to Moscow it will be up to the individual athletes and officials themselves, guided by their own consciences, to make a decision whether or not to participate.
- (f) Should the Government take action strongly to recommend or indeed to enforce a boycott it would place British citizens who hold office in international sporting Federations in a very serious situation.

There are a number of British citizens who are able to exercise some influence in the development of world sport by virtue of their election to international office.

- (f) The power base of British sport within the world administrative structure would be destroyed if international officials were forbidden or exhorted to boycott the international assemblies and Conferences that are timed to coincide with the Moscow Olympic Games and which are arranged by the International Federations themselves.

It must be understood that a partial boycott of the Olympic Games, such as the one which affected the Montreal Olympic Games when some 30 countries withdrew their support, may not significantly diminish the importance and value of the Games in Moscow but will almost certainly place in jeopardy the whole future of the Olympic movement.

Furthermore in retaliation for any boycott of the Moscow Olympics the Soviet Union and its supporters would seriously disrupt all opportunities, be they for Olympic sports or non-Olympic sports, to engage in world and other competitions in the future.