

of other American athletes who have participated in the Olympic Games over the years, and those who will in the future, a pride I am sure is shared by millions, would quickly replace it.

M.T.F.



by Gerald Mason (USA)

This commentary is in reponse to all the criticisms of the Soviets' intervention in Afghanistan and the consequences of their actions in relation to the Olympic Games. I realise the various opinions expressed represent the political, psychological, and subjective views. My objective here is to present a facet of this subject in wider depth than I have read regarding this situation.

First of all, if we are a truly strong and secure people, we should not be afraid to enter the Games. However, it is this very psychological entity that is making it difficult for us to compete in a nation that we have disliked since its inception. How many Americans know that our troops were on Russian soil in order to quell their revolution ? I feel they have long since forgiven us for our intervention in their internal affairs.

At this point in our history, the pain of seeing our people held hostage without being able to free them is damaging to our national ego, coupled with the fact that the Soviets, with apparent disdain, defiantly entered a neighbouring Marxist country to quell what they thought was political unrest in a Moslem State. One must remember that over 25 million Moslems live peacefully in the Soviet Union. The Soviets see the fanatical Moslems holding American embassy personnel hostage and are naturally worried. I think we Americans, unable to protect our embassy personnel while the Soviets are showing strength in protecting their interests, have temporarily had our "macho" image shattered.

I feel that people using the argument that the world attended the Berlin Games in 1936 and

should atone for this dastardly act by boycotting the Games in Moscow know little of history or of their own psychological makeup. Hitler wrote "Mein Kampf" in 1923 and explained to the world what he had in mind towards the Jews and other so-called inferior peoples of the earth. Since the Jews had been persecuted for centuries, Hitler's hate had a familiar ring that had previously been tolerated by civilised nations in the past. Hitler used the "big-lie" technique to the ultimate expression. He stated that the Jews were capitalists that strangled nations with their money but also were leaders in the Communist movement that would subvert national integrity. Hitler wanted to have it both ways with the Jews, and most of the world believed him. Someone once stated that if Hitler didn't have the Jews, he would have had to invent them. He proclaimed the Third Reich would last a thousand years, but his dream died at Stalingrad in the winter of 1942.

The Soviet Union is another situation altogether. As the saying goes, "what you see is what you get". They admittedly are an atheistic government, believing the statement of Karl Marx that religion is the opiate of the people. Their constitution guarantees freedom of -religion, but obviously one's religious beliefs better be kept very personal. They also believe that people should not be exploited for personal profit. The United States believes in the capitalist system and the idea of individual profit, but we would not subscribe to the principle that we are exploiting people in the process. We call it freedom ; the communists call it exploitation. There are arguments on both sides of this question, but this should not interfere with Olympic competition.

I recall that after the Second World War, we constantly referred to the Soviet Union and their satellite countries as being behind the iron curtain. The Soviets suffered a loss of approximately 20 million citizens and soldiers, and their country was decimated by the German army and their fellow fascist and nazi sympathisers from countries that are now called the eastern bloc. They were the wounded bear and rightly distrustful of western democracies because, as previously

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mentioned, western allies tried to abort their revolution from the outset. Now, the irony of the situation is that we are putting an iron curtain around our athletes to keep them out of a country that is ready to welcome the United States. Believe me, American blacks will not be snubbed as Jesse Owens was by Hitler if they win medals. Jews will be able to compete in these Olympic Games as opposed to the 1936 Games.

America, do not back off from competing against the Soviets in their homeland ! Do not act like a spoiled child because we have suffered a few temporary setbacks recently. We are still strong ; and if we really believe our system is better than theirs, let the athletes compete. Do not let Jimmy Carter frighten the American people by overreacting to a situation that he and his policies may have fostered in the first place. Personally, I cannot understand how a President held in such low esteem by the American public could have risen so fast in popularity by a crisis he himself could have caused in admittedly underestimating, first, the strong reaction of the Iranian students when he let the Shah come into his country and, second, by not realising that the Soviets would protect their self interest-using force if necessary. Remember, we sent our military might thousands of miles from our homeland twice ; they left our shores not to protect democratic regimes but to stop civil war in Korea and Vietnam, according to what we thought was in our best interest.

Yes, the Soviets are our adversaries, not necessarily an enemy, but an opponent. Rather, we compete economically and in sports than on the battlefield where there will be no winners in an atomic or hydrogen holocaust. The Soviets do not proclaim they will live a thousand years, as Hitler did, but the Soviets are here to stay and the capitalist countries will have to learn to live with them. Americans have never backed down from a challenge before, and now is not the time to show fear.

G.M.

