

Soviets trying to close Olympic boycott gap

By DICK WEST

Columnist for The Los Angeles Times Syndicate

WASHINGTON — It is conventional wisdom from the White House almost to the Kremlin that the Soviet boycott of the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles is a retaliation for the American boycott of the 1980 Olympic games in Moscow.

Generally overlooked, however, are the strides the Soviets have made, demonstrated by their ability to mount a full-scale withdrawal, toward closing the boycott gap.

It must now be recognized that Russia has the ability not to take part in athletic contests anywhere in the world. Their disengagement capacity raises the question of how long they will continue a policy of merely reacting to inaction.

Sooner or later, probably sooner, we can expect them to seize the initiative by launching a preventive boycott on their own. Then it will be too late for us to deploy American gymnasts in Western Europe or come up with a new basketball basing mode.

The next thing we know, Third World countries will be lured into signing Olympic non-participation treaties. The best bet to keep the boycott situation from getting out of hand is immediate resumption of the Strategic Abstention Limitation Talks.

Under a new SALT agreement, unilateral boycotts could be banned, with neither side permitted to avoid sending athletes to the Olympics.

The "build-out" proposal first advanced by the United States offers possibly good grounds for negotiation. Here is an illustration of how it would work:

For each new world-class platform diver the Soviets withdrew from international

competition, they would have to enter one or more aquatic events they had previously passed up.

Our side, of course, would be bound by the same rule, with verification procedures solidly in place.

The result would guarantee both countries as many Olympic medals as they had won in the past.

In other words, theoretically neither the Soviets nor the Americans could pull out of a relay race without entering long distance runners, male or female, in the place of the proscribed contestants.

Whatever the formula, it is essential that both countries give up a bit of their boycott power. Deterrence has had its place, sure. It is almost axiomatic that the Soviets wouldn't dare have boycotted the Olympics first, if they were certain the Games would be hit by an American boycott of equal force.

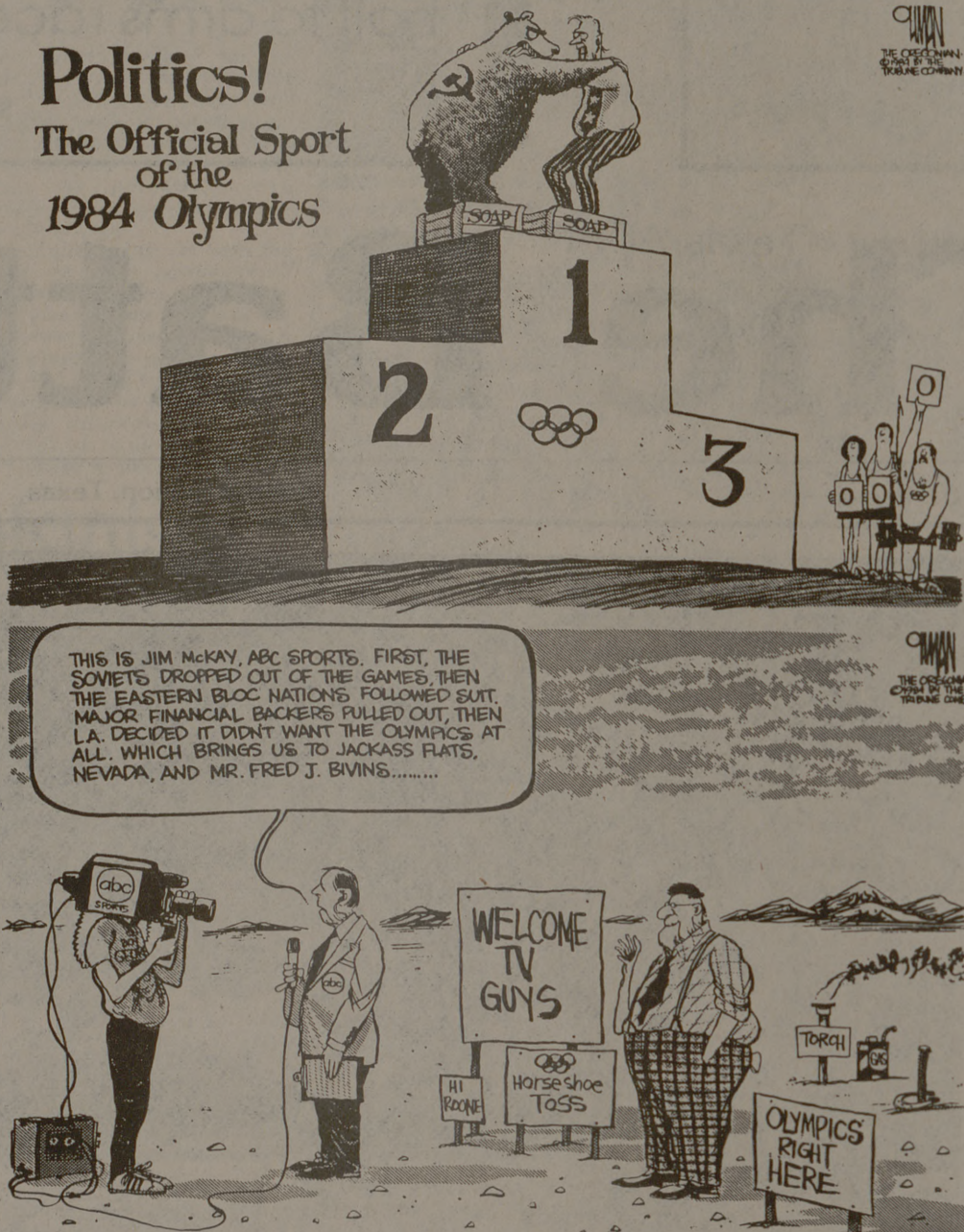
That premise no longer is valid, however. One of the worse dangers is the prospect that one country might misjudge the other country's intentions.

There could, for example, be a case where the Soviets might mistake American disqualification of the steroid-taking weight-lifter for an all-out boycott. They would then feel compelled to stage a counter-boycott of their own.

As a worse case scenario, we can envision at least a television miniseries based on the devastation that would occur should the United States and the Soviet Union authorize boycotts simultaneously.

If you think scenes from "The Day After" were horrifying, wait till "After the Starting Blocks" appears on the screen.

Politics! The Official Sport of the 1984 Olympics



Letters

Fan appreciates Chandler's effort

Editor: As one who has followed all the sports teams at A&M and attended the games involving the major teams, I believe I can be proved statistically that the baseball team has the best winning percentage all during my 13 years (since 1970).

One force has been constant during those years. That force is the coaching of Tom Chandler. His coaching is exhibited by fielders who actually go to the cut-off man, who turn over the ball to the play regularly, catchers who truly oversee the game, hitters who always make contact. All of this is not by happenstance. Chandler must be credited for those 26 years of painstaking drilling of fundamentals and strategy of baseball.

This fan would like to thank Coach Chandler and his teams — particularly the present one — for making absorbing afternoons of evening. I wish them luck in the NCAA tournament.

Richard Department of Education

Mongolian attitudes on the Olympic boycott

By ART BUCHWALD

Columnist for The Los Angeles Times Syndicate

It was admittedly a body blow to the West when the Soviets pulled out of the Olympics, but it was nothing compared to what happened when the news reached Mongolia.

While the Soviet athletes had to accept their government's decision whether they liked it or not, it wasn't easy to persuade Outer Mongolia's only long-distance runner that he wasn't going to Los Angeles.

Ghengis Kahn was jogging out on the Gobi Desert when his track coach, Yurt Temujin, rode out on his camel 20 miles to break the tidings.

"How am I doing?" Ghengis asked, hardly puffing.

"You're doing fine. But we just got word from Ulan Bator that Mongolia is withdrawing from the 1984 Olympics."

Kahn was flabbergasted. "You're putting me on."

"I'm not, Ghengis. We just got orders from the KGB to tell you to stop running. The Russians are pulling out, and they told us we have to support their boycott or else."

"You mean I've been pounding bare-foot on this hot sand for four years for nothing?"

"What can I tell you, Ghengis? The Kremlin says they're doing it for your own good. They were afraid if you went to Los Angeles your life would be in danger."

Kahn said, "Who would want to hurt a Mongolian in California?"

"Ghengis, it isn't for us to question the decisions of Moscow. But if the Russians don't field their team, we can't send ours."

"Why not? We don't have any quarrel

with the United States."

"If we showed up and they didn't, it would be a signal to the West that the Socialist nations are in ferment."

"Good. Let's go."

"It's not that simple. They won't fly us out of the country."

"Maybe I could run to the Caspian Sea and pick up a foreign freighter? It would be good practice for me."

"I'm sorry, Ghengis, but you're going to have to live with the idea that you won't be competing this year."

Tears formed in Kahn's eyes. "This means I won't see Lana Turner. You promised me if I trained real hard I could meet her in California. My dream for four years was that she would be in the stands cheering for me when I crossed the finish line."

The coach dismounted from his camel and put his arm around Kahn. "I

know exactly how you feel. I was hoping to meet Claudette Colbert. I loved her last movie, 'It Happened One Night,' which just showed in Mandal Gobi last week. But there is nothing we can do about it. The Politburo is getting even for what the United States did to us four years ago in Moscow."

"If they weren't going to Los Angeles, why didn't they tell us in 1980, so I wouldn't have calluses all over my feet?"

"I can't answer that question, Ghengis. You know the Kremlin never tells Mongolia anything."

Kahn put his head in his hands. "I could have been a contender. I could have won a gold medal. I could have seen Disneyland. I might have even been invited by Joan Crawford for a weekend in Malibu."

"You must never mention those capitalist thoughts when you get back to

Ulan Bator."

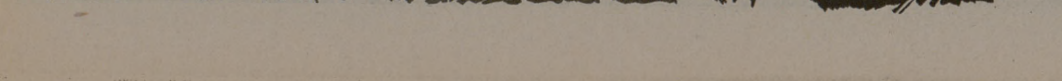
"Why do I have to go to Ulan Bator? The Soviet Minister of Education wants you to hold a press conference. Soviet television is telling the Russians how happy you are that their leaders have chosen not to participate in the games in Los Angeles. He wants to profess solidarity with all the peoples of the world who will not compete against the capitalist lackeys who are threatening world peace in part of the globe. If you say what I tell you, they will give you a medal every athlete who doesn't compete in Los Angeles."

"It's not the same as seeing Lana Turner," Kahn said.

"But it will still be better than nothing for the next Olympics in a Ulan Bator Gulag for four years."



I'LL BE GLAD WHEN THIS CALIFORNIA PRIMARY IS OVER.



Democratic runoffs cut both ways

By ARNOLD SAWISLAK

Columnist for The Los Angeles Times Syndicate

WASHINGTON — A note to Jesse Jackson: Don't mention Katie Hall when you argue that runoff primaries discriminate against blacks.

Hall, the first and only black ever to represent Indiana in the House, won't be around next year because she ran second in the first and only Democratic primary May 8.

In 1982, she replaced a white, Rep. Adam Benjamin, who died after the primary. She was appointed the Democratic nominee and won with 56 percent of the vote.

This year, she had primary opposition from both Peter Vislosky, who was Benjamin's aide, and county prosecutor Jack Crawford. Vislosky got 35 percent, Hall 33 percent and Crawford 32 percent.

Under the system of second or runoff primaries, held when no candidate has received more than 50 percent of the first primary vote, Hall would still have a chance, however slim in a white majority district, to retain her seat. But under the plurality system used in Indiana, she became a lame duck on May 9.

Another test of Jackson's unwavering contention that runoff primaries are a device to deny political power to blacks is coming next month in Mississippi.

Two years ago, the 2nd District became the first in the state with a majority black population, although its voting age population was estimated to be 48 percent black. The Democrats nominated black state legislator Robert Clark; the Republicans white former Judge Webb Franklin. In November, Clark got 48 percent of the vote; Franklin 50 percent.

This year, Clark is running for the Democratic nomination again with three opponents, two blacks and a white. As pointed out by Richard E. Cohen of the National Journal, it is conceivable that the three blacks will split the June 5 primary vote enough to put the white candidate in first place.

If that happened in a non-runoff state, the white could get the nomination with as little as 26 percent of the total vote. In Mississippi, the odds are high that one of the three blacks will have a second chance to win the nomination.

None of this is to say that the runoff system is perfectly fair to blacks. Jackson likes to cite the 1982 case of North Carolina black legislator H.M. Michaux, who was first with 44 percent of the first primary vote in the 2nd District.

In the runoff Michaux lost, 54 percent to 46 percent, to Tim Valentine, a white, who won the seat in November.

Jackson contends that the second primary gave white chance to gang up on Michaux and deny him the nation.

This year, Valentine got another strong challenge—a black Democrat, Kenneth Spaulding, but won the election 50.6 percent to 48 percent in the first primary.

The only lesson from all this is similar to the one Senate liberals have learned about filibusters. For senators trying to pass civil rights legislation were stopped by Southerners who held the floor until the sponsors up on their bills. The liberals tried, and to some extent succeeded in making it easier to stop filibusters.

But recently it has been the liberals as much as the servatives who have resorted to the filibuster to block they considered odious legislation. They found out the filibuster was a two-edged weapon. Jackson may disagree that the runoff primary also cuts both ways.

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