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**Time Capsule 1980: The Boycott of
the Moscow Summer Olympics**

Lead: When the 1980 Olympic Summer Games were held in Moscow, over sixty nations were missing. The boycott was led by the United States as a protest over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: In December 1979 Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan to support and stabilize the communist regime, at that time facing growing resistance among the Afghan people. The locals responded to the invasion

with an insurgent war in one of most rugged and harsh climates in the world.

International response to invasion was led by the United States and took the form of a boycott of the 1980 Summer Olympics. On March 21, 1980, President Jimmy Carter made the official announcement because of the Soviets firm refusal to withdraw its forces. Other nations followed suit – including West Germany, Japan, China and Canada and still others, such as the U.K. and France, while supporting the boycott, allowed their athletes to compete under the banner of the Olympic flag.

Carter's position was supported by

the United States Congress, and in April the United States Olympic Committee voted not to send a team to Moscow. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) asserted that the games should remain independent of politics and continued its support for Moscow. Alternative games for those boycotting nations were held in Philadelphia at the University of Pennsylvania. Twenty-nine nations competed in the so-called “Liberty Bell Classic.”

The boycott of the 1980 Summer Games in Moscow, as well as other boycotts, are controversial. Many believe that acts of aggression and/or violation of human rights justify a boycott. Others believe boycotts are

counter-productive and support a competitive arena totally free of politics and point out that, in the wide scheme of things, it is only the athletes who are really hurt by Olympic boycotts. In response to the American-led boycott , fourteen Eastern Bloc countries including the Soviet Union, Cuba and East Germany (but not Romania) boycotted the 1984 Los Angeles Games. This paved the way for the complete domination of the games by U.S. athletes who won a total of 153 medals.

Research by Ann Johnson, at the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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