



**OUR MAN
IN HAIFA**

CARL ALPERT

Israel's Olympic Dilemma

HAIFA -- No other country in the world will find it more difficult than Israel to reach a decision with respect to participation in the Moscow Olympics. A few short months ago we were concerned lest we not be invited, as a result of the Arab boycott attempt to keep us away. Today we are faced with a grave dilemma, whether or not to accept the invitation which did reach us.

President Carter has clearly stated all the weighty arguments for non-participation. They need not be repeated here. Every true Israeli subscribes heartily to the condemnation of naked physical aggression, and to the attempts of any superpower to extend its control over neighboring states. In addition, Israel feels a deep sense of loyalty to and identification

with the U.S. which has done so much to assure Israel's defense. But -- and it's a big but -- there are factors involved which apply uniquely to Israel, and which cannot be lightly brushed aside. A digest summary of these factors should suffice to underline Israel's problem.

1. We are engaged in a constant struggle to remain in international sports bodies while the Arabs have been seeking, with some degree of success, to oust us. We have protested on the grounds that the Arabs are mixing politics with sports. Should we not eliminate ourselves from the Olympics for that very reason and thus justify the Arab campaign against us?

2. Our relations with the USSR go beyond immediate politics. Russia has a Jewish population of over two million, and any provocative action on our part could result in an immediate hermetic sealing of the door of exit for them. Can we have it on our conscience that our defiance of Russia on the Olympic issue caused cessation of Jewish emigration?

3. Our presence or absence in Moscow will actually have not the slightest effect on the major involved. If Britain, Germany, Canada and other big states stay away, Russian prestige is struck a blow. Our absence won't affect the Olympics in any way. The only one to be hurt would be ourselves.

4. Indeed, Russia would be happy to have

ISRAELITE ADS PAY

us stay away. Long before we were invited there was hesitation in Moscow on the grounds that Israel represents a security problem, requiring special protection. Remember Munich? The Soviet Union could not ask us to stay away, but if we bowed out we would bring them great relief.

We should not minimize the effect on Russian Jews of the appearance of an Israeli team, under the flag of Israel, at the international games. Previous visits to Russia by Israel troupes in much smaller numbers invariably contributed to a welling up of intense Jewish sentiment and identification with the Jewish people, followed by new expressions of desire to come to Israel. The propaganda value of our appearance on the Olympic fields is much greater for us than for any other nation.

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