

to: elaine chene
re: lionel martin (avana)

slug: cuba and the olympics

WR 299

havana, may 11 -- the soviet announcement cast a pall of uncertainty over the women's basketball pre-olympics which began here may 5 and ends may 16. bulgaria's last game in the elimination round of the tournament (may 9) against czechoslovakia was played hours after the bulgarian olympic committee announced that country's withdrawal from the olympics. the winner of the game, czechoslovakia passed onto the final round of the tournament but its only a matter of time before that nation follows the lead of the soviets.

two other teams went into the final round which, like czechoslovakia are unlikely to go to los angeles even if they win the right: hungary and cuba.

originally the project was to choose the best four national teams out of 19 nations competing in the tournament to go to the summer olympics. the soviet union has automatically won the right to participate there in women's basketball as winners of the 1980 moscow gold medal in the event. but with the soviet withdrawal, it was announced that five teams that are competing here will go to the olympics. and with the prospects of a withdrawal on the part of cuba, hungary and czechoslovakia it might be necessary to choose runner ups to go to los angeles if any of these teams win that right.

boris stankovic, the president of the international amateur basketball federation told reporters +it is a tragedy and it shows that once any kind of politically motivated boycott of the olympics begin, there is no telling where it will stop.

as for the cubans, the soviet, bulgaria and east german statements on the reasons for their withdrawal was given wide coverage and read on national television here in cuba.

gonzalez guerra, president of the cuban olympic committee said that no decision had as yet been made and many believe that none will be announced for some days (they have until june 2). he said that the united states had not given cuba the right to land its planes in los angeles and complained that neither cuban judges or sports writers had been guaranteed physical protection in los angeles.

the cuban minister of education and sports, jose ramon fernandez, speaking to visiting sports writers, said no decision on the olympics had been made by the cuban olympic committee yet but he gave what many interpreted as sufficient reason for cuban withdrawal. fernandez stressed what he called +the

hostile political climate that exists in los angeles, often stimulated by counterrevolution organisations.+ he said that that climate militated against an atmosphere of fair and healthy olympic competition. he pointed to the stories in the u.s. press about plans by certain anti communist organisations in the united sta

united states to encourage the defection of socialist bloc athletes which include offering large sums of money and providing for +safe houses+ in los angeles. fernandez said that no such hostile atmosphere existed in havana two years ago when the central american games took place there, nor did they exist in the panamerican games in caracas in 1983 nor did they exist, he said, in other olympic games.. he said these right wing organisations were even organising an hysterical campaign that could put the lives and physical integrity of visiting athletes in danger. he said that this was being done +under the protection of american authorities+. he said it was a pity that there will no possibility of fair and healthy stepsphere of competition at the games. but, he said, cuban athletes continue training and no decision has been made.

fernandez' remarks were given unusual coverage on television radio and in newspapers here which led many to believe that the way was being prepared for a pullout.

alberto juantorena, the +cuban gaselle+ who won the 400 and 800 m sprints at montreal in 1976 and was looking forward to a comeback try at this olympics said he would abide by any decision made by the cuban olympic committee +without question+. he said that if they decide that the atmosphere is such in los angeles as to destroy the spirit of olympic play, cuban athletes, although disappointed would support the decision.

the cuban press has reproduced several posters put out by communist groups in the u.s. in one it vittukvkmittuvttava

