

July 25, 1985

Interview with Fidel Castro

Citation:

"Interview with Fidel Castro", July 25, 1985, Wilson Center Digital Archive, International Olympic Committee Archives (Switzerland), SEOUL' 88, POLITICAL MATTERS, DE 1982 A MAI 86. Obtained for NKIDP by Sergey Radchenko.
<https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113445>

Summary:

A portion of an interview with Fidel Castro by Mervyn Dymally, an American politician, where Castro discusses his view that the 1988 Summer Olympic games in Seoul should be a joint effort between North and South Korea.

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Transcript - English

RUG 25.7.85
PRESS RELEASE

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FIDEL CASTRO

THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC MOVEMENT, THE GRAVE CRISIS WHICH WILL BE
CAUSED BY THE GAMES IN SEOUL IN 1988 AND THE ONLY POSSIBLE SOLUTION

Last March, Commander in Chief Fidel Castro, President of the Council of State and of Ministers of the Republic of Cuba held a long interview with North American personalities, academic Jeffrey Elliot and Congressman Mervin Dymally. In the course of several working sessions, numerous economic, political and historical questions were considered in detail.

Among the subjects and in response to a question by his discussion partners, President Fidel Castro explained Cuba's position on the current situation in the international Olympic Movement and on the next Olympic Games in Seoul in 1988.

Attached is the complete text of the part of this interview on the above subject.

MERVIN DYMALLY:... I have one last question to put to you and two to Professor Elliot. Does Cuba intend to send a team to the Olympics in Korea in 1988?

FIDEL CASTRO: Nothing has been decided yet. I have addressed myself to the Olympic Committee and indicated the necessity of sharing these Olympic Games between the two parts of the Korean territory. I believe that, in a country which has been the theatre of a bloody war, during which hundreds of thousands of men of many nations died, which provoked destruction and which caused a deep wound in the Korean people, these Olympic Games, in the form in which they are planned, are sectarian, that they are not making a contribution to unity but to division, that they will not help to bind the wounds but to reopen them, that they will not serve the cause of peace and cooperation between peoples. Also, I have suggested to Mr. Samaranch, President of the International Olympic Committee, that he distribute the competitions between the two parts of the Korean territory, as this is the only solution possible.

Do not forget the problems of Los Angeles. And if there was no security in Los Angeles, it is difficult to imagine that there could be any in Seoul, under a repressive, sanguinary regime which is an exist double of that of Pionchet or is a carbon copy made by the Pinochet of Korea. You are aware of the horrible human rights violations which have taken place; you known [sic] that South Korea is full of North American bases, North American soldiers, that it is the property of American multinationals. Stubborn insistence on holding the Olympic Games in the planned form, ignoring historical realities, will, in my opinion, lead to a very serious problem within the Olympic Movement. Samaranch can travel from one end of Europe to the other, in the socialist countries and everywhere; the multimillionaire Vasquez Rana can make lots of trips in his luxurious private jet to visit countries in Africa and the third world, after selling the possibility of holding the 1987 Panamerican Games to Indianapolis for 25 million dollars and depriving Cuba of this right. They can be both as optimistic as they like, but it will not be so easy to pull to [sic] Olympic Movement of the trop that has been set for it.

We shall see what the reaction of the third world, of the Non-Aligned movement will

be and what the reaction of the socialist countries will be, in the final analysis, the countries which did not go the [sic] Los Angeles because of lack of security; we shall see what China will do, when we know that 100,000 children of the Chinese people died in the struggle against the North American troops who had invaded the People's Democratic Republic of Korea.

Frankly, I believe that the Olympiads, such as they have been planned, will create situations which will be very embarrassing from a moral point of view for many countries, not only socialist countries many countries of the third world.

I have spoken with leaders of third-world countries and the idea of sharing the Olympics seems to them good and fair and even the only possible solution to the situation created. I believe that is the only thing which would really avoid serious difficulties for the Olympic Movement and perhaps its dissolution.

The Olympic Movement emerged during the colonial era. Up to now, the Olympic Games have above all been used by rich industrialised countries to display their wealth, their good diet and the excellence of their technique. It would be worthwhile calculating how many medals have been won by athletes from the third world, where there are no sports facilities or physical education and sports teachers, where children and young people, from whose ranks athletes are supposed to come, are inadequately fed - how many medals they have won in all the Olympic Games held in the world and how many have been won by the United States and the industrialised countries. These competitions very often serve to stir up contempt for the countries of the third world, of Asia, Africa and Latin America, so backward, so incapable, so powerless, so intellectually limited that they can almost never win medals in the Olympics. Every four years at these events the inferiority of the Indians, the Blacks, the Yellow-skinned people, the people of mixed race is measured against the superiority of white society, even if it is the North American Blacks who win most of the medals on behalf of the rich, industrialised, white society of the United States.

Samaranch has asked that the United Nations support the Olympic Movement. I am absolutely in agreement, although I do not believe that we have the same concept, the same aims, the same intentions. I am of the opinion, and have been for a long time, that the United Nations should take an interest in sport and should concern itself with sport as it does with science, education, culture, health, industrial development and economic relations between countries.

I am a firm supporter of the idea that the United Nations should have an institution like UNICEF, the OMS, the PNUD to encourage and promote sport and physical education. Sport and physical education are activities vital to man's health, education, recreation and wellbeing. The practice of sport and physical exercises can do for mankind what millions of medicines can never do. Physical exercises make it possible to prolong life and can be used in the treatment of many illnesses. Systematic sport and exercise educate, discipline and strengthen the will and prepare a human being for production and for life. I believe that it is thanks to sport that I was able myself to withstand the hardness of life in the mountains and to survive over twenty-six years of intense political work without a heart attack or high blood pressure. However, over four thousand million people who live in the third world have only a very vague idea of what sport is all about.

Independently of this United Nations institution I have spoken of, national and international sports organisations could continue to exist. Even the Olympic Movement, if it is reformed, can continue to exist on condition that it takes on truly democratic forms, that is to say if all countries are represented by delegated [sic] elected in each one, under the aegis of the United Nations. If even the Church had its Reform, why should not the Olympic Movement have one too?

But, if you prefer, it is the United Nations institution of which I have spoken which could organise the Olympic Games. It is not a question therefore of the United Nations supporting the Olympic Committee, but of them reorganizing and leading the Olympic Movement.

The revenues from sports events should be used to help the countries of the third world, especially those which have the least resources, to develop sport. We should arrange things so that the countries of the third world have an equal right to hold the Olympics. The Olympics are held exclusively in rich countries, with the sole exception of Mexico. Who are those who have gleaned all the medals at these Games? Who had benefited from these fabulous sums of money, the 200 million dollars reaped at Los Angeles? It was announced that they would be invested in sports facilities in California. But that, together with the rest of the United States, is the very place where sports facilities are most abundant. Why not invest them in a poor country of Latin America, in Bolivia, in Ecuador, in Central America? Why not invest them in Burkina, in Ethiopia, in Mozambique or other African countries? Why not use them to help build sports facilities in, say, the poor countries of Asia, in the countries of the third world? This allocation of 200 million dollars to the richest State of the richest country in the world is proof of the weaknesses and anachronistic ideas of the Olympic Committee, which, into the bargain, now wants to include professional sport in Olympism. This allocation constitutes an act of pillage, a genuine theft, morally inexcusable inasmuch as the revenue from the Olympics is the fruit of the efforts of athletes from all countries. Without them, there would be no Olympics and no revenues. It was announced that the athletes of the third world would have part of the costs they incurred in Los Angeles reimbursed. That is insulting charity on a par with the little presents Vasquez Rana carries in his private plane for the sports officials of the third world.

The Olympic Movement was conceived, let us speak frankly, during the colonial era; many of its methods, its style, its ideas are rooted in the old ideas of the colonial age. Now, we are longer colonies, we no longer need Counts, Marquises and millionaires to tell us what we should be doing in sport. That is why I am asking the United Nations to intervene. There are in our countries reserves of physical and mental potential more than adequate for sport; what is lacking is the economic and social development, sports facilities; what is lacking is food, not only for the great masses of the population, but sometimes even for the athletes.

I believe that the same thing is happening with sport as with the economies of the third-world countries. At this very moment, it is shameful to see unbridled competition between the large cities of Europe to obtain the Olympic Games of 1992; London, Barcelona, Paris, in short the capitals of the former colonial powers are fighting to be place where the few athletes from neo-colonialised countries will be playing a walk-on role. But tell me a little about the possibilities Ethiopia, Mozambique, Angola, the Congo, the Republic of Guinea, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, the African countries have of putting forward a candidature. What chances have Ecuador, Peru, Guyana, Panama, Nicaragua and over a hundred third-world countries of hosting the Games? When will they be able to do it? That is why, I repeat, the United Nations should intervene in the matter. And I think that if this question were discussed within this organisation, many interesting points would emerge.

To sum up, I have same idea of the Olympics as I have on the relations between the rich industrialised world and the third world.

You ask me whether we are going to send a team. We have still plenty of time to consider, deliberate and speak with many friends from the third world and with the socialist countries, because we have a lot to say on this subject, many suggestions to make.

And of course, if we want to save the Olympic Movement, I think we must avoid the catastrophe which the choice of Seoul alone implies and share the Olympics. The People's Democratic Republic of Korea would be prepared to do so. I think that in this way a contribution can be made towards saving the Olympic Movement so that it can be reformed afterwards, because it can not go on passing from crisis to crisis in this way: crisis in Moscow, crisis in Los Angeles and crisis, without any doubt, at the point things have reached, in Seoul. A way out of this crisis, which is not exactly cyclic [sic] but institutional, must be found. Once that step has been taken, the Olympic Movement should reform itself because it can not go on like this. Small countries of Europe with next to no athletes have two representatives within the Olympic Committee, whereas others who have greater weight in sporting terms have none. That is not an organisation representing the various countries, but an oligarchic, autarkical institution which exists for itself, because it appoints representatives in the countries of the world.

In a few words, since you put the question to me, I will tell you in all frankness that it is an institution conceived and organised according to the ideas of the last century, or, if you prefer, the Middle Ages, like the Orders of Knights at the time of the Crusades; it is manipulated by the great western economic powers, politics has a hand in all that, and I think that the most serious thing is Seoul. Where did this idea come from? Who inspired it? How could there be agreement to commit this blunder?

But, I repeat, we have a lot of time before us in order to reflect and take a decision.