

November 29, 1984

**Letter from Fidel Castro to the President of the
International Olympic Committee Juan Antonio
Samaranch**

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Summary:

Letter from Cuban leader Fidel Castro the President of the International Olympic Committee Juan Antonio Samaranch on the 1988 Seoul Olympics

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Havana City, 29th of November 1984

Mr. Juan Antonio Samaranch

IOC President

Lausanne, Switzerland

Esteemed señor Samaranch,

You know my interest in the development of sports. It is because of this that I dare write these lines.

As you may already know, our country, in the lapse of these 25 years, has proportionally [to the rest of the world] done the most for sports. [We] have worked to achieve massive sport participation in schools and in social [life], where all of our people have the right to participate; the professional sport has disappeared, the entrances to the sporting events are free, and practically every year, we celebrate one school Olympiad, where all who possess the aptitude have the opportunity to compete.

As far as international events are concerned, in spite of our scarce economic resources, we are present, and fraternally provide solidary help in sports to any country that requests it.

The effort and results obtained by our athletes, trainers and managers have led us to reach an outstanding position in Central American sports, Pan-American and worldwide, as well as to occupy important positions in numerous international sport federations and organizations.

With the authority that our efforts grant us, as faithful defenders of the amateur sports and the Olympic principles, and corresponding to the wish and interests of our people in celebrating the Pan-American games, which constitute a beautiful tradition of strengthening ties of friendship and fraternity among the athletes of this hemisphere, [we've] aspired in past years to be granted the status of the host country of the games, after Ecuador, based on the superior right of not having the previous opportunity of celebrating them, and because by that time no other country had requested them.

Since 1982, from the inauguration of the IX Games of Central America and the Caribbean, in your presence, we requested the President of the PASO, Mr. Mario Vásquez Raña, that if there was abandonment by the host country of the X Pan-American games, Havana City should be in the position of organizing [the X Pan-American games] and providing all the support to such an event. On occasion of the IX Pan-American Games in Caracas, in 1983, the Olympic Committee of Ecuador was not able to present the governmental documentation and so a new date was decided, at the same time that a PASO meeting was summoned in Havana.

On that occasion again, when the Cuban Olympic Committee declared that it was not going to the XXIII Olympic games in Los Angeles for elemental solidarity with the socialist countries which had for many years helped us extraordinarily with the development of sports, and without any accountability for the problem that arose in Los Angeles, the President of the PASO, in a surprising manner, canceled the celebration of the meeting summoned for the days 8, 9 and 10 of June in Havana, where our country was to be considered [for the right to be] the host of the 1987 Games in case Ecuador, whose term ended in a few days, were not be able to

celebrate them [the Games]. He alleged that with the present confusing situation it was not convenient to realize them in Havana, when, until that moment, the confirmation of attendance was counted upon, with flight number, date and arrival time of the representatives of 26 countries.

Evidence exists to confirm that, since that period, a new compromise unknown to us has been established. That is confirmed by the consultation that señor Vásquez Raña had with the majority of the members of the PASO Executive, without the knowledge of Manuel González Guerra -- from Cuba -- and of Sabino Hernández -- from Ecuador -- to travel to the city of Indianapolis; by letters of the government of [the state of] Indiana, on the 1st of June, and the mayor of Indianapolis, dated 3rd of June, in which [they] requested to host the X Games. This unknown compromise was ratified during Mario Vásquez Raña's visit to Indianapolis, on the 19th of October, the date when [he] received the letter of request from president Ronald Reagan.

On the other hand, the United States had celebrated the Pan-Americans in Chicago in 1959; under the same flag the games were held in Puerto Rico in 1979; for the second time, in 1983 [sic], [the United States] hosted of the Olympic Games; in 1988 these games will be celebrated in Seoul under the benevolent protection of the troops and bases of the United States, and now in addition, in spite of the sabotage of the Games held in Moscow and the fact the Olympics were held in their territory, they were granted [the right to be] the alternative host in the Pan-American games of 1987, under the supposed and almost assured [fact] that Ecuador, due to a lack of economic resources, will not be able to celebrate [the games].

Cuba was almost stripped of its aspirations of [being] the alternate host during the Executive reunion of the PASO celebrated in Mexico City. In this meeting, in spite of granting Ecuador a new deadline until the 15th of December, which violated point 61 of Article 16 of the PASO Statutes, which state: "if the designated host does not abide by its commitments, the Executive Committee has the power to limit the host from the realization [of the games], trying, to the extent possible, to respect the zone that has the right [of hosting the games]". There was no reason to submit a new host to a vote when a new deadline had been granted. What factors influenced this decision of rapid and illegal [violation] of the Statutes? To favor the granting of the host [right] to Indianapolis, for the first time in the history of PASO, a consensus was abandoned and it came to the sinuous procedure of the rigged vote, doubtful and secret, whose only referee was señor Vásquez Raña, whose previous, dark manners and compromises with Indianapolis were known. With this action, the true spirit of the Olympics has disappeared from the Pan-American context and it has been shown that substantial financial resources and the political pressures from the United States decide where they can and where they can't effectuate competitions of this sort.

I consider that in these circumstances, the only alternative, if the honor and prestige of the Olympics in this hemisphere are to be saved, is, with the economic and technical resources that the international Olympic movement can muster, to support Ecuador which has time until the following 15th of December for official acceptance, and whose Olympic committee continues to make admirable and almost heroic efforts to hold the Games, if they are able to obtain the minimal [amount] of indispensable resources, which are the only obstacle to them taking place. There is no other possible solution, if damage is to be avoided in confidence, unity and development of the sphere of sports in this hemisphere.

In the past few years, the Olympic Games, as a result of the profits earned through the television, publicity and other factors, have been penetrated by elements unknown to sports. For this reason the Games in Los Angeles were called "The Dollar Games."

The purest principles of the Olympics are violated and insulted when we lend these

acts with the spirit and the letter of the Olympic Charter, which textually expresses:

"The Olympic Games are not for profit. No one is permitted to profit from the Olympic Games. If it were not for the voluntary service given by thousands of men and women who are members of the IOC, the IFs, the NOCs and the national federations, there would be no Olympic Games. It would be impossible to pay for these services, which are so gladly contributed by those who believe in amateur sport. The Games rest on this splendid and solid foundation and all are determined that neither individuals, organizations or nations shall be permitted to profit from them, politically or commercially. That is why the Olympic Rules provide that all profits, if any, from the Olympic Games must be paid to the International Olympic Committee and be used for the promotion of the Olympic Movement or the development of amateur sport."

We wonder: "What has happened to the fabulous earnings of the XXIII Olympic Games held in Los Angeles?" The diversion of these resources to other purposes is a flagrant violation of the spirit and the principles of the Olympic Charter. For the next games, absurd schedules for the competitions have been spoken about, for the convenience and the big offers of North American television. The mercantilist conception corrupts and completely diverts the essence of the Olympic [spirit]. Besides, due to this change, poor and underdeveloped countries will never have the possibility of hosting sporting events of this nature.

With respect to the aforesaid, we estimate that when the XXIV Games were granted to Seoul, the best host was not chosen. The Korean nation's territory has been artificially and arbitrarily divided into two parts. Not long ago a bloody war took place that caused the complete destruction of North Korea and the loss of hundreds of thousands of its children. In addition, many Chinese combatants died in the struggle against the invaders of the North Korean territory. In this war South Koreans, North Americans and citizens of many other nations also died. The South is practically occupied by troops and [military] bases of the United States. Its local government is not a precise example of respect of the liberties and the social and human rights of its people. These facts are known and remembered by the world, they will continue to influence socialist States, and the Non Aligned and third world countries will especially take them into account.

The blood spilled in Korea is still fresh in the memory of humanity.

The Olympic games in Seoul, in the way they are conceived, do not contribute to the unity of the Korean nation, they do not help heal the wounds of the war, [they] do not really promote peace, the harmony, the cooperation and the friendship between the people. And of course, the Olympic movement will not gain the prestige, the strength and the unity that is really needed after the recent and recurring crises. I even doubt they will be able to bear much more.

I nevertheless believe that the ultimate and maybe irreversible crisis can still be avoided, which in my opinion, in all sincerity and friendship, is in sight. That might be achieved with the brave decision, constructive and wise, of sharing in equal parts or in approximately equal, depending on the possibilities and interests of both parts of Korea, of the Olympic Games of 1988. I speak, of course, from a purely personal perspective; I don't know what the leaders of both territories of Korea and the rest of the countries think, but at this point I don't see any other possibility of saving with honor the next Games.

For all of these reasons, esteemed Samaranch, I think that we are at a crucial moment for the worldwide sports movement. The decisions that are taken must be clear and well thought out.

We understand that it is indispensable to resolve the problems that arose in recent times; we firmly believe in the necessity of finding fair and equitable solutions that preserve the worldwide sports movement from the penetration of factors beyond the sports which deform, violate and corrupt the Olympic principles, as the only way to maintain the elevated and noble objectives of the Olympics.

With the same sincerity and openness that I expose these worries and ideas, I wish to express my conviction that your wise and prudent direction, which is based in a profound and uninterested love for the sport, could decisively contribute to defeat these difficulties. Count on it with the sincere and loyal cooperation of Cuba.

I intend to equally transmit the worries and ideas contained in this letter to the rest of the leaders of the Olympic movement and make it public.

Friendly,

(signature)

Fidel Castro Ruz