

January 13, 1988

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

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Summary:

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Mr. Juan Antonio Samarach
President
International Olympic Committee

Havana, 13th of January 1988

Esteemed friend Samarach:

You have been witness to the efforts that our country has exerted, in which I have participated personally, to make the realization of the XXIV Olympic Games more successful under the auspices of both parts of Korea.

When I wrote to you, in September 1987, about this matter, I confirmed our disposition of doing everything necessary to avoid frustrating what back then seemed possible. In that sense, I had to address the authorities and the people of the Democratic Republic of Korea to expose our criteria with all the parts, that, in one way or another, had to concur with the efforts for an organized realization of the Olympics, to which they laid down their highest aspirations being in disposition to yield on everything that was not fundamental and did not damage their principles [sic]. We realized that if we didn't hold Olympic Games that were not satisfactory to everyone, the Olympic spirit would have taken a big step back.

With hope we saw the activities conducted by you, the visits from the representatives of the International Olympic Committee to both parts of Korea, the encounters that you carried out with their representatives, and we knew with satisfaction that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea did everything they could and even accepted having an unequal participation in the Olympics, in a conciliatory laudable effort.

There was also another hope: that the complex and difficult internal situation in the southern part of Korea would change.

In 1987 a situation that was expected had emerged. The protests of the people moved the prevailing system, and the regime on the way to disappearance went to all lengths, even the most ferocious, planting death in different parts of the country, in order to stay.

The announcement of general elections as a result of the heroic struggle of the people led to the appearance of an expectation of a democratic opening that, on the one hand, would provide the adequate climate for celebrating the Olympics and, at the same time, facilitate a better spirit of cooperation for the co-sponsorship of the Games.

Unfortunately, things have not turned out this way. Such an opening never took place. Hopes were frustrated. Nothing changed. The repression once again prevails, the prisons increase, the mistreatment of the population has flared up, and the discontent of the people becomes deeper. Nobody can guarantee that in the middle of the Olympics energetic popular protests would not surge again and with them the most ferocious repressive measures against the people. Really, even without the slightest purpose of mixing the political problems of Korea with sports, even our primary school children comprehend that under bullets, tear gas and the mass repression of the people, the healthiest and most honorable conditions for the Olympic Games will not be present.

In spite of these negative circumstances, the Olympics realized under such risky conditions could only be guaranteed, in our judgment, through the miracle of bringing the internal political factors to a consensus in the Southern part of Korea, currently faced with irreconcilable struggle, for the relaxed realization of the Games and the co-sponsorship by both parts of Korea.

Conscious of the importance of the Olympic movement, we think that we can still examine that possibility, and we wish that such premises could be met.

We base ourselves upon these deep convictions when deciding our conduct in relation to the Olympics of 1988. But we do not wish to contravene in the slightest the Olympic regulations, nor, despite our disagreements with the celebration of the Olympic Games in those conditions, can we impute the purpose of sabotaging the activity.

The Olympic Committee and the Cuban Government have reached to the agreement of not signing up, namely, simply, not commit to participate in the Games. Even though we deeply regret this unavoidable decision, our people and our athletes, who abide by deep ethic norms and a great sense of honor, will not be discouraged and will continue to participate in the Olympics of Barcelona in 1992, if we are not sanctioned for maintaining a dignified behavior. We would like, however, to communicate, dear friend Samarach, that in consideration of the great interest you have taken in our participation, if the miracle of guaranteeing safe and violence-free games in Seoul is made, and you, with your proverbial tenacity, achieve the feat of co-sponsorship, we would be willing to reconsider our decision, provided that in such circumstances you and the International Olympic Committee consider the modest presence of Cuba useful.

I beg you take into account that for Cuba the moral principles of the people are more important than the emotions of the Olympic Games and the gold medals that could be obtained.

I wish to express the assurances of my highest personal esteem.

(signature)

Fidel Castro Ruz