

Central Intelligence Agency



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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

17 July 1984

Alleged KKK Death Threats to Third World Olympic Athletes: A Soviet Active Measure

Summary

We believe the Soviets are involved in producing and disseminating forgeries of Ku Klux Klan letters threatening the lives of Olympic athletes from numerous Third World countries. [redacted]

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The National Olympic Committees of eleven Asian and African countries have recently received letters threatening the lives of their Olympic athletes. The letters, allegedly sent from the United States by the Ku Klux Klan, are extremely racist and violent in tone. They describe lynchings and shootings which would take place if Asian athletes or black athletes from Africa attend the games in Los Angeles. The countries which have received the letters are

This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Soviet Analysis. It was written by [redacted] the Policy Analysis Division. Comments and queries may be addressed to Chief, Policy Analysis Division, [redacted]

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Malaysia, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Senegal, Cameroon, Zambia, China, Singapore, Japan, and Hong Kong. [redacted]

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We believe the letters are forgeries produced and disseminated by the Soviet Union or Soviet agents in order to bolster Moscow's claim that athletes' security cannot be guaranteed at the Olympics, to reduce Third World participation at the L.A. Games, and to discredit the United States. This conclusion is supported by the following facts:

- The letters do not appear to have been written by a native English speaker. They contain errors in grammar and syntax that a native speaker would not commit.
- The letters spell "Ku Klux Klan" with a hyphen between the first two words, a construction not used in English. Moreover, according to the State Department, material published by Klan groups usually contains the full name of the organization and not simply "Ku Klux Klan" alone.
- The multiple surfacing of the letters is typical of a large Soviet active measures effort. In a similar mailing operation of late June, the Soviets are believed to be involved in circulating a 1976 CIA document to newspapers in Austria, Denmark, Sweden, and Great Britain.
- The mailing of the letters appears to have been timed to coincide with Secretary of State George Shultz's appearance in Malaysia this week. The sender could count on extensive coverage by the international press corps accompanying the Secretary--coverage which the Soviet Union would certainly desire.
- The story of the letters was very quickly picked up by Soviet media. The typical Soviet active measures modus operandi is to disseminate disinformation abroad and subsequently replay it in the Soviet press. According to Soviet calculations, this replaying enhances the credibility of both the original disinformation and any later versions.
- The letters were mailed to the correct addresses of National Olympic Committees, which included post office box numbers in some cases. The Klan would probably experience some difficulty in obtaining such information.

- The FBI has no information that the Klan is involved in the mailings.
- According to the FBI, the Klan has never targeted Asians and has never addressed the issue of Third World participation in the Los Angeles Olympics.
- None of the pro-Soviet African or Asian nations boycotting the Olympics--North Korea, Ethiopia, Angola, Vietnam, Laos--has received a threatening letter. The Soviets probably excluded these states as a result of receiving their firm commitment to boycott the Games.

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