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## Sofia and the press

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The press expressed its disapprobation with the Sofia Session. The journalists who were present and... those who were not there such as particularly virulent reporters representing certain German newspapers, all agreed that the public had been misinformed with regard to the decisions taken during the Session.

Yet, the International Olympic Committee had done its very best to satisfy the Bulgarian special correspondents. For the first time in the course of its existence, the International Olympic Committee appointed a press attaché fully conversant in Olympic affairs who, every night, took endless trouble to give an accurate account of the proceedings of the day to the press. But the numerous local and foreign reporters who were present at these press conferences were, unfortunately not all specialists in sporting matters. A number of these journalists made no secret of the fact that they had gone to Sofia not so much to report on the Session of the International Olympic Committee, but to visit a country behind the Iron Curtain on which they certainly wrote most well informed articles. Their *accounts* of Olympic news were certainly less adequate. How can a correspondent on politics be expected to understand, even on a special occasion, what is happening in Olympism ?

The case of the *absent journalists from Sofia* strikes us as even more serious. Indeed, they were the first to publish accounts of the Session strewn with blatant errors. and this for a very good reason : they were not there. An example at hand is that of Great Britain, where people showed concern when the news, that the International Olympic Committee had passed the measure of payment for broken time, was broadcasted. In that country, people feared that the Olympic funds raised from public subscription to send the British contingent to the Olympic Games would be used to help the cause of payment for broken time. Nothing could be further from the truth. This error had to be rectified. Incidents of this nature do untold harm to a cause, the meaning of which has not yet been fully understood by a certain element of the press. These incidents are bound to occur more and more frequently as long as serious newspapers undertake to report on a Congress where they did not send anyone of their staff and when they base their statements on information collected from agencies only. We are convinced that to be able to fully under-

stand and then interpret the spirit of a Congress, it is essential to have been there, for presence creates the atmosphere.

On the otherhand, we wish to raise the case of a fair number of German newspapers, to mention only them, which have published criticisms very often unjustified dealing with problems raised and solved at Sofia when *not one of these newspapers* had sent a reporter there. How can one pose as a critic without having been there ?

The problem presents another aspect. The International Olympic Committee is fully aware of its own responsibilities and knows that it is its duty as well as its interest to keep the press as fully informed as possible. It does so with the meagre resources at its disposal, for, let us not forget it, all persons who occupy themselves with Olympism are amateurs. They give to sport and receive nothing from it. They serve their ideal by devoting their time and their money to the Olympic cause. The International Olympic Committee relies a great deal on the press and it does not neglect any of its duties towards it, but it does so within the limit of its means always. It does not expect the press to sing its praise but merely to relate the facts as they are. Everybody can make mistakes and neither the International Olympic Committee nor any international organization are infallible.

The Chancellery of the International Olympic Committee at Lausanne puts itself entirely at the disposal of the mess, and has on several occasions proved that it is not afraid of criticism, when it reproduces in the columns of the Bulletin any deserving observations as long as these criticisms are objective. Moreover, it is incumbent on the press to inform the public, and we do not think the International Olympic Committee has the responsibility to *educate* certain journalists on Olympic matters in general. It rests with the newspapers and the news agencies to delegate competent reporters. There is no doubt that the city of Sofia is a source of attraction in itself, but it is out of the question, under the protest of Olympism to use it for other ends !

Of course, these remarks do not apply to the *specialized* press which when it criticizes objectively and shows sound judgment and a thorough knowledge of the subject. (It is certainly its absolute right and even its duty to criticize.)