

MEXICO WITHOUT THE SOUTH AFRICANS

On February the 16th, the result of the postal vote dealing with the South African question was published. One will recollect that the IOC members were to vote for or against a resolution presented by Mr. WEIR (Australia), the end of which contained a proposal to invite a multi-racial team to the Mexican Games.

The vote was positive. It was then decided to ask the Organizing Committee of the Mexican Games to send a formal invitation to the South African National Olympic Committee.

When this was known, agitation grew in the sports circles and other spheres. The Press printed opinions both in favour of and opposing the decision taken in Grenoble.

An African Organization? the Supreme Council for Sport in Africa, held a meeting in Lagos in order to induce all its members to boycott the Mexican Games, should South Africa participate. Simultaneously, race-riots broke out throughout the world. At this point President BRUNDAGE decided to call a meeting of the IOC Executive Board in Lausanne on April 20th and 21st, in order to examine the situation created and elaborate a policy accordingly.

During the week preceding the meeting of the "Nine", the President travelled to South Africa privately, where he had the opportunity to meet the representatives of the National Olympic Committee of South Africa.

Immediately after the beginning of the sitting on April 21st, Mr. BRUNDAGE, explained that the development of the situation was such that the members of the Executive Board had to consider carefully the four major factors:

- a) The reputation of the ICC and the Olympic Movement.
- b) that of the organizing Committee and of the Games.
- c) that of the South African National Olympic Committee.
- d) that of the National Olympic Committee and the International Federations.

The President declared that he had no personal solution to these problems and recommended that each member should firstly think the matter over privately and then discuss it together in small groups in order to find the best possible means of reaching a solution upon which all could unanimously agree, after carefully considering the four above-mentioned points.

During the debates it became evident that the duty of the Executive Board was to:

- preserve the honour and integrity of the IOC and avoid a breach within the amateur sports world,
- Save the Mexico Games since the Mexican had given all their care and attention to the organization of the events and had elaborated a cultural programme of high value and were not to carry the consequences of a situation for which they were not responsible.
- Not yield to any threats of boycotts or to any political pressure.

At last the general opinion seemed to agree unanimously, upon one point: The presence of a South African team in Mexico would not be wise.

At the end of the two days harsh discussions during which arguments were exposed by every member and comforting solutions were sought, the Executive Board agreed unanimously upon the wording of the following telegram sent to all IOC members:-

"IN VIEW OF ALL THE INFORMATION ON THE INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE RECEIVED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD AT THIS MEETING+ IT IS UNANIMOUSLY OF 'THE OPINION THAT IT WOULD BE MOST UNWISE FOR A SOUTH AFRICAN TEAM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GAMES OF THE XIX OLYMPIAD - THEREFORE, THE EXECUTIVE BOARD STRONGLY RECOMMENDS THAT YOU ENDORSE THIS UNANIMOUS PROPOSAL TO WITHDRAW THE INVITATION TO THESE GAMES STOP THIS POSTAL VOTE IS SUBMITTED UNDER RULE NO.20 PLEASE REPLY IMMEDIATELY BY CABLE CIO LAUSANNE=

AVERY BRUNDAGE".

On Wednesday, April 24. at 4.00 p.m. Mr. Avery BRUNDAGE - President of the International Olympic Committee gave a press conference at the Château de Vidy. It was the first official announcement on the voting by members of the International Olympic Committee on the recommendation of the Executive Board to withdraw the invitation which the South African Olympic Committee has received to participate in the Games of the XIX Olympiad.

The President declared: It should be emphasized that in adopting this recommendation the International Olympic Committee is not bowing to threats or pressures of any kind from those who do not understand the true Olympic philosophy. Boycott is not a word used in sport circles.

The Executive Board was facing a deep and world wide cleavage in public opinion that threatened to split the Olympic family and to endanger the success of the XIX Olympiad. It was necessary to reach a decision, and if possible a unanimous decision immediately.

The only point in the lengthy discussions on which the nine members of the Executive Board could agree, was, that because of the explosive conditions throughout the world and the ugly demonstrations, rioting, and other violent happenings in many different countries during the last sixty days, there was actual danger if a South African team appeared at the Games.

You will find in a carefully worded cablegram, which was sent to all members of the International Olympic Committee, after two solid days of heated but earnest discussions, that there is no criticism of Mexico, no criticism of South Africa and no criticism of the International Olympic Committee. There were no suspensions, no expulsions nor were there any legal technicalities mentioned. Such procedures are foreign to the sport world, which is based on fair play and good sportsmanship, but in its endeavour to preserve the Olympic Movement, one of the most priceless and powerful instruments of our present civilization, it was necessary to be realistic, facts right or wrong must be faced.

Since our primary concern is the assembly of the youth of all the 125 countries now active in the Olympic Movement, in friendly and peaceful competition, we regret deeply the

the consequences for the individual participants who had hoped to take part in this Grand Festival of Youth in Mexico City. It is a sad commentary on the state of the world today.

All of the ballots have not yet been received, so the voting is not finished. There will be another statement tomorrow.

At present, we have 13 "NO" and 41 "YES" votes to withdraw the invitation.

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The final result of the vote was:

Forty seven : in favour.
Sixteen : against.
Eighth : abstentions.

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