

# Independent views

## \* Olympic Games



by *Walter Lutz,*  
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The discussions repeat themselves every four years, ever more persistently—the Olympic Games, say the prophecies, have come to an end. They have been perverted and have no chance of survival. Like a red thread this thought winds its way through previews, reflections and Olympic books.

But every four years the Games nevertheless take place in a wondrous way to spite all the grouses of the augurs, more fascinating, more sparkling, more world-embracing than before. Thanks to television the level of attention continues to increase, and «Sport» prints the highest number of copies since its creation.

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The undifferentiated picture, only in coarse black and white, is often painted by people who are among the notorious deniers and questioners, but who have never taken the time to familiarise themselves with international sport. And, astonishingly, we sometimes

even hear from the mouths of past Olympic competitors, who chime in the chorus of the challengers, that it used to be «completely different».

Yet all these articles from the writing desk heroes have still not been able to stifle the Olympic Games.

And the louder the criticism becomes, the clearer it is (however provocative it may seem): if the Olympic Games had not existed one would have had to invent them.

There is something peculiar about a lot of these disputes and criticism—the Olympic Games have become a scapegoat. According to them it is the fault of Olympism that in the last twenty years sport has changed so fundamentally—just as, in fact, mankind in all spheres of life.

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When shameless assassins go round the Olympic village, attack a team and take athletes hostage, this is of course the fault of the Olympic Games, the fault of the victim, not that of the perpetrator.

When judges cheat in figure skating or ski jumping, i.e. favouring their compatriots with high marks and giving the rivals low marks, this is the result of the Olympic antispirit. And when spectators at the ski jump boo and try to disconcert their star's opponent, here again the Olympic Games are of course to blame. What disgrace for the Olympics! Such corruption of course is unheard of at world championships, which have nothing whatsoever to do with the Olympics, or at a football match between two clubs, be it in South America, Italy or even Switzerland. The judge has not failed, nor the man, nor sport, nor the spectator—it seems it is the Olympic Games that have failed.

<sup>1</sup> Editorial in "Sport" of 27th February 1976

Of course there is a lot to criticise in the way that the Olympic Games are run by the International Olympic Committee and a lot in the IOC—from the structure point of view—to improve, adapt and find fault with. But it is not immune against the blunt generalisations and overall judgements of the «terribles simplificateurs», who do not hesitate to muddle everything up and mistake cause and effect.

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Since there has been the mass medium of television the Olympic Games have obtained a completely new dimension and sport has attained a world-wide degree of popularity which it would never have reached without the Games, with just world championships alone. Perhaps the phenomenon of the Olympic Games and their universality is also explained by the fact that today, in a world in dispute and split into blocks, they are the only occasion in which everybody, regardless of colour, race, religion, reputation, social position, political system, cultural level and level of development, can participate together.

What an event: 500 to 800 million people in all corners of the world experience and see exactly the same thing at the same time and even at the moment it happens. Only the Olympic Games can accomplish this.

W. L.

