

OLYMPIC GAMES AND EDUCATORS

From July 19th. to August 3 rd. 1952, the Celebrations of the XVth. Olympic Games will take place at Helsinki. This year, all the big nations, without exception, will probably take part: U. R. S. S., which hitherto, never competed in the Games, has just confirmed its intention to participate. Japan and Germany which had been eliminated from the last Olympiads will also take part. More than 80 nations have, up to date, formed their Olympic Committee. From the first time in past and modern history, the Games are about to become truly universal. Their prestige is constantly increasing, despite periodical gloomy forecasts. A complete

Olympic language has sprung up from the Stadium pervading all the most diverse spheres of life, such as the work-shops, restaurants and the stores. The Olympic symbols, the Flame and the five interlaced rings have penetrated the language of the press, school-teachers, diplomats and poets. Children know by heart the performances of their favourite Olympic heroes, this often better than their history or mathematic' lessons.

Nurmi or Hansenne have haunted the dreams of adolescents in schools or in the work-shops: sport mythology ignores all class barriers.

G. Cousin, in his Reminiscences on the



VI. Winter Olympic Games, Oslo 1952.

Egil Nansen, a grand-son of the famous Norwegian explorer, brought the Olympic flame the last part from the long run from Morgedalén to Bislett Stadium at the opening ceremony.

Elementary School and Electro-mechanical Workshop days wrote: « Ladoumègue was beating his records and, a few of us, were scampering away, into the suburban streets, calling each other by our favourites' names. »

Educators, do not undervalue this interest! do not allow the press to be the only medium of keeping this interest, by quoting technical results and publishing gossiping news about the lives of the vedettes. Do not limit yourselves to a simple little discussion on the subject, with your pupils, your apprentices, your road-users and campers. Disregard this absurd discrepancy between the programm... and reality, the actual teaching of directed activities. Education is an entity: When speaking of the life of ancient times, do speak as much of the Stadium in Olympia, as of the Acropolis, of the fight of Pollux against the King of the Bebryces as well as of the Golden Fleece. If you teach Modern History, mention the « Olympic fights » of Baron de Coubertin with Mr. Picard, General-Secretary of the Universal Exhibition, as well as of all the events, big or small, which helped to create the ambiance of Paris of 1900. If you have to recall the history of the United States of America or Finland, do not omit to mention Jess Owens or Paavo

Nurmi: these olympic champions are the prevailing elements constituting a sentimental geography which may easily be the good road to « just geography ».

If you wish to praise the beauty of form and movement, do not only think of the statues, representing Greek Art in the Louvre, nor of the leaps of Serge Lifar, but dwell also upon the stature and the famous jump of Jess Owens. Do not forget that A. Obey, has written an account of Dr. Paul Martin's 800m's performance and of Lewden's jump at the 1924 Games, exactly as he wrote *Noah* or *L'Homme de Cendres*. There are races which, with their sudden happenings and sensational turn of events, lead us to the very source of the drama. Lastly, if you have to explain what makes the value of a personality or of a life, do not hesitate, have the audacity of illustrating the great thoughts of the moralists, by sometimes alluding to the very simple story of our champions' lives. Let us admit that the moral credit of the latter will often make a greater impression on the mind of the young of today than the prestige of Montaigne or Pascal. Finally, in the interest of the humanities, of their influence in the lives of the young, it is as well, perhaps to know and mention the fact that Plato won laurel wreaths in wrestling contest and that Giraudoux has once won the title of Champion 400m. in 50", for his University.

(This is an extract from the book Regards neufs sur les Jeux olympiques, by J. and J. Dumazedier and his collaborator Maurice Baquet, National trainer at Magnare. Grand Prix Littérature sportive, to be published in August 1952. Collection People and Culture. Editions du Seuil (Paris).)
