

Looking back on the Games of the XVth Olympiad.

Impressions and what we learned from them

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Some time has now elapsed since the closing Ceremony of the Games when the fire of the Stadium tower was extinguished. It is yet too soon for us to judge this event in its true perspective but let us record our impressions and draw a few lessons from the Games of the XVth Olympiad.

THE OUTSTANDING SUCCESS OF THE GAMES

A perfect technical organization, an ideal sportive atmosphere, a record attendance

of seventy participating nations represented by their best athletes, the majority of whom were on the top of their form, all these factors went to make the Helsinki Games a complete success. They will be an epoch-making event which will remain an epic in the history of modern Olympism.

Let us repeat our congratulations to the Finnish organizers with Baron Erik von Frenckell, member of the I. O. C. for Finland, at their head. They showed how a

small country and a comparatively unpretentious city can assure the smooth running and completely satisfactory organization of the Games, which met with the International Sports Federations as well as all the Participants' entire approval.

THE OLYMPIC TRADITION

In history, there is no more striking example of the revival of an old tradition than that offered by the modern Olympic Games. It is common knowledge that this brilliant conception and generous initiative is due to the late Baron Pierre de Coubertin who created the Ceremonial and the Protocol as well as set up the general program of the Renovated Olympic Games. Instead of the olives branches gathered round Zeus olympic temple, the winners of our modern Games are presented with medals. During a fortnight, hundreds of men and women have matched their strength against each other while competing in running, jumping, swimming, wrestling, all fighting in order to win a medal, the champion's supreme reward.

INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD

During a fortnight, the athletes belonging to seventy nations, have been living side by side, getting acquainted with each other, and have come to show mutual esteem and understanding. Now to esteem and understand each other means loving, thus paving the way to Peace. The Helsinki Games will be noteworthy in history on account of the return of the Russian athletes, who since 1912 kept away from the Olympic Movement. They gave full evidence that they were perfectly conversant with the olympic organization and with the International Sporting Movement. They were specially trained for these Games where they cut a brilliant figure. One cannot but rejoice at their return to the International Sportive Olympic Movement as well as welcome the adherence of numerous new countries taking part in the Games for the first time.

A SHADOW IS CAST OVER THE GAMES

I would fail in my duty and prove myself an unworthy disciple of Pierre de Coubertin if I did not raise the point which struck me as being the most unpleasant factor pervading throughout the Helsinki Games, I mean the confrontation of two countries, two giants, two tendencies as represented by the United States of America and the Union of Sovietic Socialist Republics. From the start, the public asked itself which of the two groups would prevail over the other. In the stores of Helsinki, a list was published daily,

recording the total of the medals awarded to each country particularly the one awarded to the U. S. A. and the U. S. S. R. athletes as well as the scoring of these two countries, although no official classification is ever drawn up during the Olympic Games. As far as I am concerned the Games of Helsinki will leave me an impression of Russo-American rivalry and a deplorable return to chauvinism which is incompatible with the spirit of the Games as conceived by Pierre de Coubertin.

LET US RETURN TO INDIVIDUALISM

The Renovator of the Games desired above all to develop individual sports and through them fostering the courteous spirit of fair play thus avoiding the display of chauvinism. He never intended the Games to assume such national importance as is the case today. Admittedly on every National Olympic Committee falls the duty to send a delegation composed of its best athletes, to the Games, but it is wrong that, in order to make them obtain the best qualifications, they should be sent to training camps for months prior to being sent to the Games, to the exclusion of all other activities.

I also wish to comment on the fact that in certain countries, the National Olympic Committees are State organizations. It is no wonder that the outcome of this is a chauvinistic spirit and that individual sport takes a back seat. Olympic sport must not be national but universal.

LET US REFRAIN FROM INCREASING THE GAMES PROGRAMME, LET US CURTAIL IT INSTEAD

Certain persons advocate the increase of the Olympic Games Programme, which has been already greatly extended in the course of these last Olympiads.

At each Olympiad, the number of events to be competed for as well as the categories have increased to such an extent that it became necessary to organize, prior to the Games, preliminary contests of hockey and basketball and to limit the number of football teams as well as to hold the Gymnastic competitions before the actual official Opening of the Games...

It is high time that we should revert to the traditions set forth by the Renovator of the Games thus reducing the Programme of events limiting it, above all, to individual contests, organizing eventually football, basketball and hockey displays as a prelude to the Games.

One must give back to Olympism its true universal character, by allowing every country to participate as is being done now but foremost by doing away entirely with the national chauvinistic spirit.