

S P E E C H

delivered by Mr. ARNOLD KAECH, Director of the Swiss Federal School of Gymnastics and Sports, Macolin, on the occasion of the presentation of the Olympic Cup by Mr. Albert MAYER, Member of the I. O. C. for Switzerland, at Lausanne on the 12th of September 1954.

Mr. President of the Swiss Olympic Committee,

Mr. Representative of the International Olympic Committee, Gentlemen,

Believe me, it is with deep gratitude and not without some emotion, that I take possession of the Olympic Cup which was instituted by Baron de Coubertin, as well as of the medal and diploma which accompany it according to a long established custom.

To take possession is, of course, a manner of speech as I am indeed aware that the Cup knows no rest as its founder intended it makes an everlasting pilgrimage, detained here or there for a year to encourage or reward those who have the honour to become its guardians. As far as I am concerned I have always regarded the awarding of the Cup as an encouragement rather than a reward.

In using the term encouragement, I would like you to be able to realise the importance of this for our school. I admit frankly that the I. O. C.'s decision came as a surprise to us although we knew that the candidature of Macolin was to be proposed through measures taken by you, our dear compatriots and Friends. But we looked upon this proposition more as a gesture of fellow feeling for us than as a reality. Why attempt to hide the fact that this reality has made us very proud. We knew that in you, we had found most powerful advocates. We also know that the merit of this distinction is not due entirely or chiefly to our School but that it reflects above all upon the sporting movement of our whole country. We know also that in an organisation as complex as the I. O. C., the choice of a neutral party sometimes avoids many difficulties. But this does not take away from our gratification in any way. We are proud to find ourselves ranking with all those who, through greater merit, have been honoured with this distinction since its inauguration.

Above all we are proud that the I. O. C., the highest authority of Olympic sport, should have thought of our little hamlet, high in the Jura mountains and should have found the efforts of our young National School worthy of its approval.

Through this gesture which I am tempted to call « paternal »- the I. O. C. binds us yet

closer to Olympism, the educative and spiritual movement which remains in face of everything a refuge for home in a world that is becoming evermore confused !

Through the regulations that it has given to sport and through its organisation stretching beyond frontiers and countries, Olympism has succeeded where all other attempts have failed. What in other spheres is either merely in its early stages or else has proved no more than a Utopia, has thanks to Olympism, been realised in the sphere of sport in the form of a law and set of international Rules, and as an authority whose power is not bounded by national frontiers. Thus Olympism has shown the way that must be followed to reach an understanding and arrive at an international organisation which is the only conceivable one in this world, in my opinion, a world that modern means of transport have made so small.

In fact, it seems that the man of science with his inventions has far outstripped the man of politics who is responsible for the organisation of modern society. If this organisation is really desirable to be progressive, I am of the opinion that Olympism could be a source of profound inspiration to those who assume this responsibility.

Thus one of the missions accomplished by Olympism is the combat against national prejudices, the creation of a supreme authority and the imposition of a common law. Yet another of its achievements is to be found in the message of fraternity and the spirit of fair play which it offers us. Above all it is an element of spiritual value. It is so closely linked with the sporting movement that we take it for granted, and yet, Gentlemen, is there a more sincere gesture than the brotherly handshake which is exchanged by two adversaries after a keen competition ? When these two adversaries have different political beliefs, I am often tempted to think that this handshake between champions is the only one exchanged without rancour and in all sincerity. Even if it is an exaggeration to claim that sport brings nations together, nevertheless one thing remains steadfast : the spirit of fair play, the brotherhood between athletes and the gestures of friendship in the stadium, all these retain their full value. It is possible that their influence may not carry very much weight in face of

hatred and violent passions, but who knows if they may not one day tip the balance on the favourable side !

Thus Olympism, as you know even better than I do, is not only a hope but a reality, not only an ideal but a reality which humanity will no longer be able to do without. As I have already said, the Olympic Cup of Baron de Coubertin will bind us still more strongly to Olympism.

I can find no better way of expressing my gratitude to the I. O. C., than to assure you that our School will show itself worthy of the great distinction with which it has been ho-

noured by placing itself more than ever at the service of Olympism as conceived by Baron de Coubertin and which he defined so well in these words :

« In the modern world which is full of mighty possibilities while threatened at the same time by perilous pitfalls, Olympism can form a school of nobility and moral integrity as well as of staying power and physical endurance and energy, providing that you do not cease to raise your conception of honour and disinterestedness to the height of your muscular prowess. »



