

Concerning the excessive Display of Nationalism

With the commendable aim of curbing the exaggerated nationalism which has been prevailing in the Olympic Games, a member of the International Olympic Committee at the Paris Sessions held in June 1955 has put forward a proposal that, on the occasion of the award of medals to the winners, a fanfare of trumpets should replace the playing of national anthems. This measure was put into force on the occasion of the European Athletics Championships held in Berne in 1954, when it met with the general approval of the public

and the leaders of the I.A.A.F. In Paris, however, an almost unanimous opposition was expressed in the course of the Conference held by the Executive Board of the International Olympic Committee with the Delegates of the International Federations. The latter demanded the maintenance of the status quo. In face of this somewhat frigid reception, the above proposal was withdrawn from the Agenda by its promoter himself. In spite of the encouragement it is likely to give to nationalism, the national anthem of the country to which the champion

belongs will continue to be played in the Olympic stadia and will go on evoking patriotic feelings in the hearts of the people.

We recall an unofficial discussion which took place a few years ago, among the members of the International Olympic Committee, it dealt with the abolishing of national flags being displayed around the Olympic Stadium. In the same way, this measure was intended to help curbing nationalistic chauvinism. Unfortunately it did not conform with the prescribed rules laid down by de Coubertin. Moreover, the matter is being brought up again today following the suggestion made by a distinguished German journalist in the course of a news conference he has just given, in which he asks for the display of national colours to be abolished during the Olympic Games. On this occasion, the great Parisian Sport newspaper „L'ÉQUIPE” in its feature of “24 hours of Sport” takes up this subject again under the following *For our country's glory* in an article published last December. L'Équipe goes on to say : “This proposal (referring to the notion evinced by the German journalist and quoted above, Ed) is one of the many suggestions which we discuss nowadays in the hope of preserving the Olympic spirit and in order that sport may not become an instrument of the cold war which is threatening to break out once more. Mr. Ernst Hornickel directs sharp criticisms at the olympic oath and refers especially to the following sentence : “We

swear to compete... etc... FOR THE HONOUR AND THE GLORY OF OUR COUNTRY, etc.” The author goes on to say: “Has anybody ever been heard to say that an olympic defeat casts a slur on the honour of a nation or, that this honour is enhanced by a record of victories ?”

Finally, the lecturer suggests that all athletes be introduced under the same colours (which would greatly complicate the task of the judges and referees... since it would do away with the team sports inasmuch that there would be no more national teams !). He admits that if need be, distinctive olympic rings could be printed on the standard sports jersey worn by the competitors, namely : black rings for Africa, green for Europe, blue for Australia, red for America and yellow rings for Asia.

We fear, however, that Mr. Hornickel will only transform nationalism into racial prejudice.

It is quite true that an Olympic defeat cannot cast a slur on the honour of a nation... but is it a display of nationalism when, at Helsinki, the 1500 m. champion, Josy Barthel, exclaimed with tears of emotion “I am especially glad for the sake of my own small native country : Luxemburg !” Are these tears and this outburst of emotion to be condemned ? One can hardly think so.

L'E.