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OLYMPISM AND UNIVERSAL PEACE

by Dr Fr.-M. Messerli, Historiographer of the International Olympic Committee

One can affirm without a doubt that the whole trend of Modern Olympism, ever since its renovation has been created with a view to promote mutual understanding among all peoples, to bring them together on a human and friendly basis in order to realize an efficacious world collaboration in the field of sport, irrespective of all political, national as well as racial or religious matters. In this respect Olympism has become an important element of PEACE. Let us recall a few facts with regard to this matter.

It is difficult for us nowadays to view in its true perspective and understand what

the general state of mind was like in our countries at the end of the XIXth Century, when, on the splendid and generous initiative of Baron Pierre de Coubertin, it was decided on the 23rd of June, at the Sorbonne in Paris, to restore the celebration of the Olympic Games, to adapt them to modern conditions of life and to create an International Committee entrusted with the task to control as well as to promote the development of the Modern Olympic Movement.

At that time, only one institution of an international character was in existence : the Red Cross which exercised its humani-

tarian and philanthropic activity over the whole world. It was founded in Geneva in 1863 by the tireless efforts of a generous, public spirited man : Henri Dunant. But at that time, the Red Cross confined its aims to one object : attending the sick and wounded in time of war. Its Committee consisted of a group of public spirited Swiss citizens, and its activity was put to contribution only in time of conflicts.

No international spirit nor any universal conception of life existed at the end of the last century ; on the contrary, for instance, in France ever since 1871, the spirit of individual contest prevailed, militarism was in fashion in numerous countries where the spirit of nationalism was provoked beyond measure and where physical culture and the practice of sport was indulged in only with the view to train and get ready for war according to national programmes. Outside this training for military service, physical education and the sport movement were almost non-existent. This state of affairs induced a tendency towards an unfortunate form of romanticism which exercised its influence over the youth of Europe.

The Revival of the Olympic Games which had been interrupted since 1600, when in ancient times they were reserved only to Greek citizens, implied an adaptation to modern life as well as giving them an universal character as well as appoint an international Committee composed of a body of members representatives of the various countries which belonged to all the continents; this meant innovating indeed as nothing of that kind existed. In fact, no institution of that type was known. Out of all the international organizations, so great in number in our present time, which date from a time ulterior, not even the U.N.O. that succeeded to the League of Nations and others, enjoy, we are certain, the same stability and prestige that the Renovated Olympism, an organization which cannot be influenced by the politics of the various governments.

Indeed we wish to pay here a high tribute to the International Red Cross Committee as well as to the Union of the various Societies serving the Red Cross for their magnificent humanitarian and philanthropic work which is brought in evidence chiefly at times of war, disasters or cataclysms. In opposition to the Red Cross which intervenes in case of necessity, the Olympic Movement, ever since its renovation, has been pursuing and is still aiming at preventing war by means of universal sport, thus giving an international character to the sportive movement which has spread to all the countries of the various continents of the world, also by adopting a set of regulations which rule sport aiming at developing and improving the standard of health of the people while being a school for fair-play and modern sportsmanship.

We do not propose to describe here the triumphal progress of the Modern Olympic

Movement which counts 80 National Olympic Committees officially recognized by the International Olympic Committee. The latter is composed of 74 members belonging to 52 different nations which they do not represent, but who are ambassadors of the International Committee in their country of origin or in the continental regions to which they belong. We do not intend either to describe here the organization of sport depending on the International Olympic Committee nor the respective function falling on the National Committees, nor the international and national sports Federations deriving from them, we shall content ourselves to mention that all this sport activity takes place harmoniously, entirely outside the activity and influence of the governments, free of all State financial interference and it shall always remain a source of pride to Modern Olympism that it has instilled in its directive Powers a spirit of self-denial and devotion- equally shared by the athletes and the artists who are competing in the Games, content to receive as rewards a silver-gilt medal as first prize, a silver medal as second prize and a bronze medal as third prize. Only amateurs can compete in the Olympic Games and Olympism has realized an universal achievement in instituting the concept of amateurism which must remain the fundamental principle of a sound physical culture and of popular sport.

The list describing the former Olympic Games contested every four years up to the present time, in the first year of each Olympiad is too well known to refer back to it, let us content ourselves to mention that these international meetings are bringing together the finest youth of the world as well as achieving an ever growing fame which fill with enthusiasm not only the people of the country where the celebration takes place, but that these gatherings are arousing the admiration of the whole world.

The Olympic Games of the 1st Olympiad when celebrated in Athens in 1896, were contested by 285 athletes belonging to 13 different nations while the Games of the XVth Olympiad, held in Helsinki in 1952, were contested by 5869 athletes belonging to 69 different nations. Let us add that since 1924, the Winter Olympic Games were held in Oslo, the last ones being the VIth in 1952 when the Games were contested by 960 competitors belonging to 30 nations.

The steady rise in the figures published above, shows that 69 nations participated in the last Olympiad celebrated in Helsinki in 1952, while 30 nations took part in the Winter Games in Oslo which were a prelude tending to prove the preponderance of this world movement, marked by the attendance at these meetings of representatives of nations where different politics and ideology thought incompatible prevailed. The athletes of the U.S.S.R. and those of the east European countries described as situated

"behind the iron curtain" competed against each other on the most friendly basis as well as displaying a spirit of good sportsmanship towards the competitors belonging to other countries, living side by side for a fortnight, fraternizing observing and greeting each other. To exchange friendly greetings and esteeming people is already half-way to friendship in an atmosphere of harmony and peace. It was a moving sight, at the Games in Helsinki, to see the various competitors after having opposed a fierce but loyally fought contest, congratulate each other, exchanging solid and loyal handshakes, congratulating the victorious champion irrespective of the nation he belonged, even when every body was fully aware that the diplomats of the said countries were enemies. This spontaneous greeting of the victorious athlete by his fellow competitors less lucky in their scoring illustrates the concepts introduced by Modern Olympism and is actually put into practice at all the various sports Championships. Thanks to a standardized form of sport Regulations applied on the first instance by the International Olympic Committee, on the occasion of the first celebration of the Games, then by the sport International Federations which are now responsible for the technical organization of all sport competitions, the athletes belonging to diverse races who are unable to express themselves in the same tongue, can now meet and compete against each other. Over the whole world, sport contests are standardized, they are judged by the same way and the results are judged on a recognized standard of scoring which is acknowledged everywhere and can be compared. Sport thanks to the stimulus given to it by the Revival of Olympism has become the most powerful link of friendship between the young people of all nations as well as an important factor of peace and reconciliation after wars and various conflicts.

Since the Revival of the Games, there occurred two outbreaks of hostilities which have ravaged the youth of the world : the first world war 1914-1918 and the war of 1939-1945. Both wars prevented the celebration of the Games of the VIth Olympiad which was to be held in Berlin in 1916 also the Games of the VIIth Olympiad (Helsinki 1940) and of the VIIIth Olympiad (London 1944). Despite the wars, the International Olympic Committee continued its activity and contact was maintained between the majority of its members.

Let us recall that in 1915, during the first world war, Lausanne was the city chosen to be the seat of the International Olympic Committee and became its administrative centre as well as the seat of its archives. It was during this same gloomy period that Baron de Coubertin wishing to keep the luminous light of Olympism burning, founded in 1915 the Olympic Institute. When the first world war came to an end, the International Olympic Com-

mittee met in its headquarters in Lausanne with the view to celebrate its 25th Anniversary. It decided to resume immediately the cycle commemorating the Olympic Games and chose Antwerp as the city where the celebrations of the Games of the VIIth Olympiad were to be held in 1920.

Less than two years after the end of the war and less than one year after the signing of the Peace Treaty, these Games were celebrated according to their usual programme grouping competitors belonging to all the different continents. Every four years, from that date, the celebration of the Olympic Games took place regularly up to the time of the outbreak of the second world war.

Here again, despite the war and the two losses sustained by the International Olympic Committee : first of all its President then its Secretary, contact was maintained between the members of the International Olympic Committee. In 1944, in the very midst of the second world war, the 50th Anniversary of the Revival of the Olympic Games was celebrated in Lausanne. The delegates of more than thirty countries belonging to both groups of the belligerents met on friendly terms without any trouble or any ict under the aegis of the Olympic Protocol. Such meeting composed of the representatives of the belligerent nations mingling together at these celebrations offers an unparalleled incident in history.

In 1944 in Lausanne were started a number of training courses for the benefit of the military prisoners who had escaped from Germany and Italy and were refugees in Switzerland. These were organized by the Olympic Institute who grouped athletes coming from eleven different nations belonging to both sides of the belligerents, these sport instructors courses gave rise to no incident, a discipline voluntarily accepted by all prevailed along with the Olympic spirit of fair-play and good sportsmanship. This fact as well as the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Olympic Jubilee, commemorated in the very midst of a world war, reflect great credit on Modern Olympism.

At the close of the second world war, namely in 1945, the periodical Congresses of the International *Olympic Committee were resumed and the celebrations of the XVIth Olympiad were held in London in 1948.

In this way, Olympism lived unhampered throughout the last two world wars, coming through the turmoil unscathed. It is under the aegis of Olympism that the bringing together of former foes took place. Already in 1919, the Directive Powers of the Olympic Committees belonging to the nations of Central Europe resumed relations with the International Olympic Committee. This also occurred in 1945 and in 1928 and 1952, The athletes of all different countries met again, fraternizing once more on the stadia and in the playing grounds where the Games

were contested. The year 1952 marks the resuming of friendly sport relations between the U.S.S.R. on the one hand and the countries belonging to the East of Europe, and on the other hand, the other independent States. This first contact between organizers and athletes of different ideology this first sport's gathering took place in perfect sporting spirit and correctness. This augurs well for future manifestations and competitions of various order well as proves well for the resuming of friendly relations between all peoples which we ardently desire in order to maintain the PEACE of the World.

In some respect, the bringing together of people in harmonious relations is one of the concepts as conceived in the ideal of Modern Olympism as defined by its Renovator, Baron Pierre de Coubertin who said:

Harmony of the body, worship of beauty, loyal work to serve the family as well as ones fellow-men, these three elements linked together forge an indissoluble tie. This represents the modern Olympic Idea, as conceived by the International Olympic Committee when it undertook to propagate and serve this ideal. Let joy penetrate everywhere, may the Olympic Ideal attain the peak of its purpose, may work extend to all its blessings, then PEACE will be built on safer grounds than by the means of ratification of treaties or the dangerous medium of fear.

"Then this World of Peace and Goodness we all yearn for will descend upon us !

"Olympism is a vital element to promote UNIVERSAL PEACE by bringing people together."