

The Organization of Sport in Eastern Europe

In the Review "L'Esclime Francaise" issue No. 101, published in February of this year, Cdt. Louis Bontemps, President of the French Fencing Federation, published a most instructive article dealing with the organization of sport in Eastern Europe. In order to be in a position to give exact information to our readers, we submitted this article to Mr. Constantin Andrianow, member of the International Olympic Committee for the U.S.S.R., begging him to give us his views on this matter and we are glad to publish herewith Mr. Andrianow's comments for which we are indebted:

Moscow, April 21st 1956.

Dear Sir,

I thank you for your letter of March 17th. It is with the deepest interest that I read the article of Cdt. Bontemps dealing with the organization of sport in Eastern Europe, which you were kind enough to send me.

I am pleased to see the interest shown by the nations of Western Europe towards sport and physical culture as practised in the U. S. S. R. and in the countries belonging to Eastern Europe. However, as you have already pointed out, it is essential that the information given should be exact and conform with the true state of affairs. That is the reason why I should like to make a few comments in connection with Cdt. Bontemps' article. I am basing these remarks on the experience acquired in the fields of physical culture and sport as practised in the U. S. S. R. From the start, we must realize that the main objects of physical culture and the practice of sport in the U. S. S. R. are the improvement of the health of the nation as well as the production of healthy citizens.

The Physical Culture Movement in our country is based on democratic principles and on the initiative of the people. The workmen, employees, the schoolchildren, students and kolkhoziens belong to the fundamental organizations which represent the collectivity of Physical Education. These units constitute the organizations of national economy and are forming the various sports Associations or clubs. These groups of physical culture include sections of the different kind of sports to which thousands of individuals belong. The evolution and expansion of the various branches of sport in the Soviet Union is controlled by sports Associations, such as athletics, basketball, rowing, fencing, swimming, etc.

The financing of physical education and the organization of sport, as well as the erection of sports installations is provided by the Government which issues grants which meet also the expenditure sustained by the syndicates, the kolkhozes and by the sports Associations. On the other hand, these Associations derive their income chiefly from the subscriptions paid by their members.

In Soviet Russia, professionalism does not exist nor are there any so called "State amateurs" in sport. Our athletes go in for physical culture and take part in competitions outside their usual work or study and do so during their spare time. They do not receive any special subsidy. As a general rule, they participate in the important competitions during the time of their annual leave which is fixed by law or during the holidays. No athlete or sportsman receive a free flat, nor free furniture, nor free cars (contrarily) to Cdt. Bontemps' assertions, Ed.) nor does it help him in any special way to gain promotion in his career. The athletes of the U. S. S. R. do not receive any prizes in kind, nor anything of value which could be converted into material advantages. The winners receive only medals, commemorative tablets, diplomas, cups etc.

On the other hand, talented sportsmen are selected according to results achieved and classified in a certain sport category, when they receive either the title of "Master in sports" or that of "Master Emeritus in sports". Meanwhile, they still go on with their ordinary occupations or studies and to improving their sportive ascendancy during their free time under the supervision of qualified instructors.

As far as regards the salaries in the U. S. S. R., each citizen is paid according to the work he performs, also according to results and his aptitudes and skill.

With regard to the remarks put forward by the author of the article dealing with the organization of sport in France, he is better placed than I am to judge the situation there.

I trust that my explanations will help to clear up certain questions raised by Cdt. Bontemps in his article, which I am returning herewith.

I am yours sincerely,

Signed : CONSTANTIN ANDRIANOW,
President of the Olympic
Committee of the U.S.S.R.