

## IS COLD WAR A WEAPON USED... *even in sport ?*

It is most unfortunate that such a title should appear in the official bulletin of the International Olympic Committee. But, we cannot ignore what is happening around us.

At the Congress of the International Athletic Federation, held in Stockholm, last Summer, the delegates of the Athletic Federation of Israel proposed that the organizers of the 'Regional Games' should be compelled to invite *all the countries* belonging to that area to participate in the Games ; failing which, the I.A.A.F. (International Athletic Federation), would forbid its affiliates to take part. The full significance of this proposal of a definite political tendency, was obviously directed against the 3rd Mediterranean Games placed under the patronage of the International Olympic Committee and which are to be held in Beirut, in 1959. This proposal was accepted much to the surprise of all those interested in this problem. On the otherhand, the Lebanese Organizers cannot invite the athletes from Israel for the simple reason that Lebanon is still at war with that country. It is therefore somewhat surprising to hear of the decision taken by the International Amateur Athletic Federation at its Congress because, had the delegates present shown some commonsense, they ought to have concluded that it was quite an impossibility for Israel athletes to accept an invitation

to go to Lebanon. 'Did we say cold war!'

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The world press commented at length the incidents which took place during the World Championship of basket-ball held in Santiago (Chile), last February. We would not have alluded to these incidents, were it not for the fact that they are connected with an Olympic sport. The U.S.S.R. and Bulgarian teams, chosen to play in the final round, refused to meet the Chinese team (Formosa). Sanctions were applied, but the impression produced by this incident was definitely unpleasant. Already, the press Agency 'Tass' announced that a postal stamp, in sign of protest, will shortly or has already been issued by the Russian P.T.T. in order to commemorate the... frustrated victory (it is said) of the U.S.S.R.'s team ! What are we going to see next ?

Cold war used even in sport.

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Whilst American athletes were fraternizing, last Summer, with athletes of the U.S. S.R. in the Stadium in Moscow, whilst Bulgarian and Spanish teams were competing in a football match in Geneva, the Swiss Ice Hockey Association forbade a hockey match to be held between the local team and a

visiting Russian team. This refusal was due to political reasons which do not even concern Switzerland ! This truly beats all. A serious blunder was the fair verdict enounced by the press in 'French' Switzerland.

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Similar examples occur ever so often, whilst the International Olympic Committee does everything in its power to make the Olympic sports' leaders realize that politics have nothing in common with sport. The article No 1 of its Fundamental Principles specifies this clearly. It is about time that people who support and serve the Olympic Movement should understand this, and that they should ignore, once for all, all pressure which seems to be imposed on them by the political leaders of their country. More and more one sees sport used as a mean where politic has failed. But the International Olympic Committee which is fully conscious of its responsibilities in connection with the direction of the Olympic Movement will never tolerate a law based on different principles than those set by the ideal it is supporting, nor will it ever accent political interference (which does not interest the International Olympic Committee) within the Olympic Movement. Recently, a National Olympic Committee withdrew *voluntarily* from the Olympic Movement for political reasons. No one attempted to make it refrain from doing so, but the fact was deplored by every one... foremost by the young athletes of that country (who are not to blame) and who would certainly have liked to meet their fellow-athletes from all over the world. Those people who are responsible for fomenting 'cold war in sport' have done it with their eyes open. The International Olympic Committee is not responsible for this state of affairs.

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The Fundamental Principles of the Olympic Rules stipulate that the Olympic Games assemble amateurs of *all* nations in a fair and equal contest. No discrimination is allowed against any country or person on racial, religious or *political* grounds. The

aims of the Olympic Movement are to promote the development among our young people, both of *physical effort* and *the moral qualifites* which are the foundations of amateur sport. Olympism also aims at bringing together *all the athletes of the world* in order to meet in a great quadrennial sport festival, impartial and inspired by goodwill, thereby helping to *maintain love and peace among the nations of the world*. The terms of this 'maxim' are to be found in Art. No 4 of the Fundamental Principles of the Olympic Charter which is accepted by all those who are supporters of the Olympic Movement ! Cold war a weapon applied to sport ? If such were the case, the International Olympic Committee would have had no hand in the matter ; we have just proved it.

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A proposal of a *constructive* measure was put to us but we consider that it would be very *regrettable* to have to go thus far... a feeling (we presume it to be the case) shared by all other sportsmen who think like us. However, we intend to publish herewith this opinion :

The National Olympic Committees putting down their names to the Games, should be asked to sign a declaration stating approximately the following : 'Our Committee, which is inspired by sincere feelings towards the Olympic ideal, looks upon the Games as a sport meeting, purely amateur, between all the athletes of the world, excluding all discriminations on racial, religious or political grounds. The Committee thus declares that its athletes are prepared to meet those of all nations, without exception, who are to participate in the Olympic Games.'

Let us admit that it would be a great pity to have recourse to such a measure, however, the latter would have the merit to prevent incidents similar to those which occurred at the basket-ball match in Santiago. Let us sincerely hope that we will not have to go thus far, considering that the text of art. No 4 of the Olympic Charter, which we have mentioned above, has been voted by *all the members of the International Olympic Committee*.