

Speech by the Hon. Giulio Andreotti

*President of the Organizing Committee for the XVIIth Olympiad
for the Inauguration of the Olympic Games*

Mr. President of the Republic, Gentleman,

To an official of the Saint Louis Olympiad of 1904 who exclaimed enthusiastically over 'the most dazzling display of sport ventures that the world *had*

ever seen', Baron de Coubertin, who had revived the Olympic Games in Athens eight years earlier, replied 'Is the world interested?... Not yet.'

At the XVII. edition of the Games, there should be no room for doubt or reservation of any kind.

Today, in this stadium, the world is really and truly represented. The five Olympic rings, initially the symbol of a generous and almost, one might say, romantic intercontinental aspiration to unity, have now become a living reality, an ample reward for all the effort, hardship and sacrifice endured by the pioneers of this modern crusade to civilize the relations between men.

There are, there have been and there always will be far too many reasons, alas, for discord, keeping hundreds of families in a constant state of fear; and only too often violence has had and has the upper hand over reason and an exact evaluation of the needs of the peoples which cannot but be the desire for peace. Therefore all that constitutes a real contribution towards channelling the exuberant energies of individuals and nations towards pacific competition on both the physical and mental plane must be appreciated, recognized and upheld.

And, if we really believe in the impossibility of replacing democratic ideals, we must concur that a month of cohabitation in the Olympic Village of thousands of young people from eighty-six nations could perhaps help in the construction and defence of peace more than the intricate political and diplomatic manoeuvring at the summit succeeds in doing. The ardent desire for peace rises upwards from the people to the governments and not viceversa.

It is then also from this point of view that we must welcome the quadrennial re-appearance of the Olympic celebration.

To the athletes taking part in the Rome Olympiad, to the officials and the judges of the events, to the sports journalists, the radio and TV commentators, the film cameramen and specialized photographers, to all the fans—known and unknown, famous and humble—who are gathered here together from so many nations, extend affectionate and grateful greetings from the Organizing Committee.

The preparatory work was certainly very hard—and I would like to say now that the efforts of the Italian National Olympic Committee officials and all those who have collaborated, are beyond all praise; we have always found such co-operation in every quarter that we cannot doubt that our efforts will be crowned with success. Also by reason of the high patronage of the President of the Republic (which has been by no means a merely conventional and distant protection) we have always been able to obtain the necessary support and authorizations.

From the Armed Forces and the Ministries, the municipal and provincial administrations of Rome, Naples and Castelgandolfo to the specialized organizations and clubs and the thousands of private citizens in every walk of life—all have given generous and voluntary assistance to ensure that the Rome Olympiad will do great honour to our country.

The principle, by which we have been guided, has been to create permanent and not provisional facilities which would only have meant a waste of money and would not have been in keeping with the spirit of sport.

All the constructional work, which the urgent pressure of town development and social progress would, in any case, soon have forced on Rome, Naples and Castelgandolfo, has in fact been speeded up and in many cases completed ahead of schedule. Therefore at the end of the Games, there will be 1805 apartments in the Olympic Village, beautiful and technically perfect sports venues, the superb *Olympic Road* and other ultra modern city road networks available to the public. And when he comes to examine the balance sheet of the Olym-

piad, the Italian contributor, the real protagonist behind the scene of Olympic expense—and this means the current taxpayer and the voluntary contributor of the painless Sunday tax on sports entertainment—will be satisfied that his money has been put to good use.

Due to coincidence with technical achievement, the Rome Olympiad, besides a record in the number of participating nations, will also register another record; that of the radiophonic and television arrangements which have been made under agreements drawn up between ourselves and companies and groups of the whole world in spite of the fact that it meant that a smaller number of foreign visitors would come to Rome. Never before has it been possible to follow a sporting event with such immediacy from every part of the world as from this evening for the XVII. Olympiad.

But whoever thinks that the Olympic are merely an entertainment rendered progressively more interesting by the records achieved, which, with the conquest of ever more arduous obstacles, exalt the perennial progress of man, is wrong. One should never lose sight of the fact that in the revival, in modern and universal dress, of the Games which were abolished fifteen centuries ago by the Emperor Theodosius after the 293rd Olympiad, De Coubertin and his friends wish primarily to give life to a principle of education and custom.

Athletic prowess—the fruit of intelligence, of the rational use of physical strength and the sacrifice of long periods of time for training purposes—is certainly exalted; but even more exalted are the qualities of loyalty, of mutual respect, of strength of spirit with a disregard of malicious envy at being beaten by better athletes, of the internationalism of sport and finally, in a special way, of amateurism, and that is to say the desire for victory as such, with no material consideration beyond *little leaves* described by Pascoli, even less of professional recompense.

The pronouncement of principles of absolute correctness which must dominate the exercise of every sport activity goes back to the remotest eras of Antiquity. Cicero (*De Officiis*, III, chap. 10) echoing a text of the Stoic Chrysippus according to which 'he who runs in the stadium must fight relentlessly with all his strength to achieve victory, but must not ever trip those against whom he is competing or push them back with his hand', will compare this disloyalty with that of the first King of Rome who had killed his brother 'in the belief that it was more to his advantage to reign alone than to share the power with another'.

Although this comparison is a paradoxical one, it shows how much importance was attributed in the classical world to loyal conduct in athletic competitions. And it is in this image that we should see the basic content of the Olympic message.

Mr. President, Gentlemen,

It is a wellknown fact, which has again been stressed these last days, that a unanimous decision of the International Olympic Committee, after Saint Louis, awarded Rome the 1908 Olympic Games. Various circumstances prevented the realization of this plan but it is interesting to read once more what Baron de Coubertin wrote on that occasion: '... I wanted Rome (he said) because only there, on its return from utilitarian America, the Olympic ideal would have assumed once more its sumptuous toga, of interwoven art and thought, in which from the very beginning I had always wished to see it attired.'

We now express the hope that the Olympic toga, already enriched by many celebrations of the Games, the last of which took place among the healthy

young Australian nation, will appear in Rome in even greater splendour than would have been the case in distant 1908.

In four years' time, the Olympic flag will rise over the stadiums of Tokyo. The flame giving ideal inspiration to those Games will thus bring together—in a country of ancient civilization and great human activity—the warmth of the two great cultural traditions, the Greek and the Latin, fused with the fascinating ideals of the Orient.

But, just as nothing and no-one has ever passed through Rome without being profoundly affected

by this contact, the Olympic Games will not be an exception to the rule, which has stood the test of thousands of years of history. And it was with great satisfaction that we heard, five days ago, the President of the International Olympic Committee express the hope that Rome would become the 'capital of the sporting world'.

This can be possible if all of us feel with deep conviction that, in considering our sport, the Olympic Games are not simply the goal, but only the solemn beginning of a long and arduous road towards the development of a real sports consciousness on the part of the Italian people.

