

Mr. Urbano Ciocetti, mayor of Rome

Mr. President of the Republic,

It is a great honour for me to be in a position to extend to you, in the presence of the Members of the International Olympic Committee, the respectful greetings of the people of Rome and to express once more, on the occasion of this solemn gathering, my sincere and devoted homage.

Honourable Members of the International Olympic Committee,

I am sure that I am expressing the unanimous feeling of the people of Rome when I say that I am happy and at the same time honoured to convey to your worthy selves a heartfelt welcome and a warm greeting from Rome which is proud to be the host country of the XVII. worldwide Olympic Games.

In fact, Rome since receiving with enthusiasm the news that she had been chosen as host country of these Games, has spent five years of impatient waiting and of intense feverish preparations and today, on the eve of the Games, is stirred with restless eagerness.

Many of you will remember that in the past, Rome has already twice had the opportunity of being host to the Olympic Games. Our renunciation of such a coveted privilege on the grounds that the city was not ready to undertake so heavy a task constituted in my opinion a wise and courageous decision, undoubtedly appreciated by all those who fully realize the importance of the great event which, in a short time, we will have the honour of celebrating.

The realization of the arduous nature of the task of organizing the Olympic Games and of the benefits deriving from these, has made us concentrate all our strength in an effort to respond worthily to the faith shown by the International Olympic Committee when, on 16th June 1955, they assigned the 1960 Olympic Games to Rome.

In fact, in these five years, vast works have been undertaken — and I think justified — to ensure a worthy celebration of the XVII Olympic Games.

You all know what measure of ruin and confusion, both material and moral, the aftermath of the last war brought in its wake; you will all have observed, I hope, the miraculous recovery of the Italian people and its Capital.

In the field of sport, as far as venues and organization are concerned, the post war years saw us start practically from zero and to have taken up the reconstruction of the existing sports venues ab imis has proved very useful from the technical point of view, since the new venues have been constructed according to the most modern and functional criteria. In fact the artists and technical experts who planned and realized these venues were able to take advantage of the most recent experiments and of the continuous progress of mo-

dern technical science, thus creating installations which may be considered real masterpieces.

I hope that you have all appreciated these venues and have noted the skill with which they have been inserted into the framework of the city by means of a series of adaptations within the city and by the construction of roads and gardens.

I think that I may safely say that the areas in which the Olympic Games will take place do not stand coldly apart from the rest of the city. From now onwards these have become an integral part of Rome just as are its ancient monuments and its old boroughs, and are considered by our fellow-citizens and, I hope, by our very welcome foreign guests, as a living and vital part of Rome.

In order to accentuate this harmonious fusion of ancient and modern and to prepare a worthy and truly unique setting for the Olympic Games, two of the most famous monuments of our city, the Basilica of Maxentius and the Baths of Caracalla, have been placed at the disposal of the Organizing Committee as sites of certain events, thus demonstrating also that the present is linked symbolically with the past in an ideal bond stronger than the barriers of time and of human vicissitudes, and expressing the everlasting vitality of Rome.

Thus we shall in a short time witness the particular character of these Olympic Games which follow the lofty tradition of the ancient Games of Hellas, to which the Olympic Games of the Modern Era remain linked.

Beneath the glorious arches and on the age-old stones of Ancient Rome as within the shining grandeur of the new sports venues, the athletes of all nations will re- evoke with great suggestive power, the keen spirit of sporting competition which already eight centuries before Christ stirred the hearts of the Greeks.

It is common knowledge that this city is not easily moved to expressions of wild enthusiasm. In actual fact, in her centuries of history, Rome has witnessed so many memorable events that she is no longer filled by that sense of wondering surprise which prompts any manifestation of popular rejoicing. But one jewel was missing from the necklace of events and unforgettable historical memories: the Olympic Games.

We are therefore proud to act as host to the Olympic Games and it is with real cordiality that we welcome the athletes, accompanying personnel and tourists, with whom we eagerly await the forthcoming events.

From the Games, which are the most complete and highest expression of competitive sports activity, Rome and Italy await a luxuriant reflowering of sport in all its branches, recognizing the great importance of the practice of sport which, by exalting the chivalrous virtues, discourage the selfish and destructive instincts and renders more worthy the young generation, the strength and hope of all nations.

This assembly of athletes from all over the world and these human contacts between men of different countries gathered here to take part in or to witness the greatest and most eagerly awaited sports event, constitutes also a meeting point of human endeavour striving to attain brotherhood and reciprocal understanding.

May the symbolic chain of the Olympic rings spiritually link the peoples who have sent their chosen youth to join together in peaceful competition!

By the twofold message sent out by Rome, cradle of the Latin civilization and centre of Catholicism, these Olympic Games exalt physical strength but, more important, the idealistic values of man and

serve as a token of peaceful co-existence and of fruitful contacts between Nations.

I bring my short speech to a close with the deep and heartfelt wish which I now send to all countries on behalf of Rome: in the hotly contested competitions now about to begin may the worthiest win, in the spirit of loyalty, generosity and understanding expressed in the motto of the white Olympic standard: *citius, altius, fortius!*