

## *Is to-day's plague of 'ISMS' affecting the Life of Sport?*

Among the prevailing plague of ISMS whose effect on sport we are seeking to determine, 'Imperialism' seems likely to cause the most harm because it exalts the taste for war. But, as a matter of fact, is it really so?

The term 'imperialism' applies to any form of political system which aims at dominating a people or a State, not only by means of territorial expansion but by all methods liable to secure for itself, its ascendancy both of power or ideology over other people or other States. Imperialisms can have a commercial or financial nature just as well as military one. It stands to reason that there is no actual imperialism in SPORT since the athlete is basically an individualist. His team or his club will find him to be capable of sacrificing himself for them, but his real aim is to increase his personal power. Is the realization of individual power of achievement apt to encourage these imperialistic tendencies which incite the masses to revolt or foster intensive nationalistic movements? We do not think so. Certain experiences nowadays seem to bear evidence to the contrary. One must bear in mind, however, that toughening through intensive training and military discipline does not present a new phenomenon. It has happened all through history and without going as far back as the time of Cyrus' armies, we should note the fact that the Expeditionary Corps raised by William the Conqueror for his invasion of Britain was trained by methods which were very modern. We could cite many other examples; but everywhere and in every

case, — and the same is true today —, one observes evidence of a close relationship between physical training and a passionate incentive of a very different order: the desire for money, nationalistic pride, exploitation of tradition. ... Always aggravated by having recourse to a kind of skilful incantation, sometimes dishonest, often ineffectual, which however at times is facilitated and encouraged by a concourse of favourable circumstances. Do away with these contingencies. Can one imagine sport alone taking the place of all these? Is it possible to conceive an invasion or armed aggression taking place on the ground of the love of sport? The notion of an army raised on such a basis, and an army being kept for this purpose could be imagined in the middle ages, but today, it would be sheer folly, and even in those days, as just now, its cohesion could not be of any durability.

An athlete, even when cast in the moulding of a team, remains a fantaisist. Anyone who has belonged to a team or has been in charge of one, is only too aware of this. A sportsman is a fantaisist, an egotist and an egocentric. These characteristics are so basically essential, that without them, sport in man is only skin deep it is not an inherent part of him. This tendency to selfishness represents in itself the only real inconvenience in sport, and we venture to state that, in spite of appearances, the player in a team is no more exempt from this defect than the athlete in individual sports; or possibly even less so.

However, these characteristics are incompatible with the spirit of war. Sport may help war in a muscular manner by producing physical fitness, endurance and courage in the bones of the men who go in for sport, it helps war once it is declared. We maintain that sport is alien to war as long as hostilities have not started, by the inevitable independence it instils in every fibre of the human being. 'To live one's own life' is a formula dear to the heart of the present generation. The success of this formula may possibly have contributed to the quick development of sport. It is indeed a formula of imperialistic nature inspired by this 'romantic imperialism' which has been so cleverly studied in all its aspects by Ernest Seillière.

It does not rule out abnegation, the spirit of self-sacrifice, but this formula also tends to favour harsh judgment and a keen sense of criticism.

For these reasons which deserve a much more extensive study, we came to the conclusion that sport should be exonerated of all criticism of harbouring imperialistic tendencies which tend towards war.

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(Ed: *These lines which could almost be of topical actuality, were not written by us but by Baron de Coubertin and are taken from a manuscript which we have found and which must have been written about 1930.*)