

Visas in West Berlin

the International Olympic Committee has sent following letter under the date of April 17, 1962.

Allied Travel Office,
Berlin,
West Germany.

Gentlemen,

You are certainly aware of the strong reaction caused recently in the world of sport, when the sportsmen of the German Democratic Republic were refused visas to the world ski championship in Chamonix, and the world ice-hockey championship in Colorado Springs (U.S.A.).

Our aim in writing this letter is not to interfere with the reasons which have prompted you to come to the decision you have thought fit to take. Above all, however, we think it pertinent to submit to you the text of *Clause 1* of the *Fundamental Principles* governing our Committee:

The Olympic Games are held every four years. They assemble amateurs of all nations in fair and equal competition. No discrimination is allowed against any country or person on grounds of race, religion or political affiliations.

The quotation of this text puts us more at ease in making our request to you.

Next year, we are to announce our decision as to the choice of city desirous of organizing the Games of the 19th Olympiad in 1968. The 1964 Games will take place in Tokyo, which presents no problem. Of the prospective towns either for the Summer Games 1968, or for the Winter ones, we have named, amongst others, towns in France, Canada and the United States. We need to know immediately, therefore, if these candidatures may be retained, for according to our statutes, entry into these countries by *all sportsmen* wishing to participate in these Games, must be assured. Now, taking into account, your recent decisions, this would not appear to be the case.

In their own interests (supposing one of these cities will be chosen) we would respectfully request you as Ultimate Authority to exercise your prerogative and guarantee that all athletes, whoever they may be, and from whatever country or territory they may come, will receive the visas necessary to participate in the Olympic Games of 1968.

In support of our demand, may we raise some points for consideration in matters of sport. Competitive sport is, indeed, one of the few remaining spheres in which the youth of the world can meet and gain mutual understanding, unhampered by the influence of politics. The spontaneous fraternity

amongst athletes, set in motion in the stadiums of the Olympic Games in Helsinki (1952), Melbourne (1956) and still more recently in Rome (1960), is positive proof that all sportsmen in the world can get along together, in spite of their sometimes differing ideologies. International Sport, and consequently the strict rules of the International Olympic Committee (the highest body in World Olympics, charged with the organization of the Games) are based on the inviolable principle of non-discrimination, which has been accepted by everybody: international federations of sport and national olympic committees.

In the affair concerning the East Germans, your Commission, has, errors excepted, foreseen two exceptions to the decision not to grant visas: humanitarian cases, and commercial exchanges. Would it not be possible to include in these cases of exception *CULTURE* of which sport forms an integral part. Further, by interpreting the texts in their broadest sense, one could show that sport, and, in particular, Olympic sport, might well be considered a *humanitarian* case. Do you not agree that, in present-day circumstances, Olympics, and sport in general, are one of the rare and best means of reminding humanity that it forms still as always, an ideal above everything: race, homeland, religion and conviction? Now, if there is a flag which well expresses this indisputable solidarity, it is the Olympic flag, with its five interlinked rings speaking of union, and recalling that the stadium — wherever it may be — is the place 'par excellence' where a young man can best feel a part of the whole called *mankind*. It is unnecessary to remind you of the Games of Ancient Greece and her *olympic truces*. We all know the story of the brotherhood of the ancient stadium. Innumerable examples can be quoted. Since then, it is permissible to affirm that sport being what it is, a higher interest, seems to appeal to us to allow it to serve humanity, above the habitual contingencies, which unfortunately, also divide and ruin this humanity.

In conclusion, we beg to attach a declaration (in French and English) dated 26th March and signed by our President Mr. Avery Brundage, of Chicago, which has received wide publicity in the world press, and had repercussions all extremely favourable and with no dissenting voice.

We should be particularly obliged if your Commission would give the request we have just formulated favourable attention. Be assured, Gentlemen, that what is at stake is the future of the whole Olympic edifice, painstakingly erected in 1894, in Paris, by the great French humanist Baron Pierre de Coubertin, who revived the Olympic Games of Modern Times. As a repercussion, the future of the 26 international federations of sport and also the 100 national olympic committees recognized by us is also at stake.

CORRESPONDENCE

We have received the following interesting letter from Lieut. Colonel R.H. Russell, president of the 'Association Internationale de Boxe Amateur', which is, as everyone knows, recognized by the International Olympic Committee and whose sport figures on the Olympic programme.

London, April 27th 1962.

The Editor Bulletin of the International Olympic Committee

Lausanne

Dear Sir,

I was interested to read in your Bulletin No. 78 an article headed *Sports in Black Africa* which related particularly to the Abidjan Games held in the Ivory Coast in December 1961.

A.I.B.A. was not officially represented at these Games since we did not receive an application for permission to hold them and were not aware they were being held until afterwards.

We have however received a Report from a representative of one of our affiliated associations who was present with his national team, and according to this the arrangements for the Boxing competition were well carried out.

The article also referred to the hope that International Federations would devote their efforts to promote the development of sport in Africa.

Your readers may therefore be interested to learn that 15 national boxing associations in Africa are already affiliated to A.I.B.A., and a further 10 have made application, and the necessary formalities are in progress.

In this aspect therefore, A.I.B.A. seems to be rather ahead of the International Olympic Committee which has only recognized 13 African countries.

You will also be interested to know that A.I.B.A. are recommending to their Congress which will be held this September, in Switzerland, that the present Executive Committee shall be increased by 3 members who

will be elected by affiliated associations in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

In this way the nations in those Continents will be certain of having one representative in the Executive Committee who will be able to present their point of view and particular problems.

We believe similar steps have been taken by other International Federations and no doubt others will follow in due course.

Yours sincerely,

R.H. Russell
Lieut. Colonel.
President.