



Speech by Mr. Avery Brundage

President of the International Olympic Committee

Mr. President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R.,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We meet today in a country that, in the last few decades, has staged a most remarkable sport development. This has been brought vividly to my attention once more, since I have just come from Stockholm, where I attended an impressive celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Games of the V. Olympiad. I was a participant in those Games and I remember very well the Russian team which came across the Baltic to Stockholm. They were fine boys but they knew little about sport. We became friends and I was invited to visit St. Petersburg as it was then called, and Moscow, to take part in some post-Olympic competitions. I still have half a dozen medals which I won in St. Petersburg. Unfortunately, the facilities

were very primitive and I broke my wrist in a jumping pit which was not a pit at all but a pile of shavings. It was impossible for me to compete in Moscow. Afterwards, I went first to Kiev and then to Odessa, my first trip in Russia and the beginning of a grand tour that took me through a dozen European countries. It was quite a different world in more ways than one in which we lived fifty years ago.

That 1912 Russian team was composed of 178 men (there were no women) and they won four medals. In 1960, twelve Olympiads later, the team from the U.S.S.R. participating in the Rome Games, was comprised of 254 men and 53 women. They were entered in every event in the programme and won 103 medals. No other country has made such a tremendous advance in such a short period. It has undoubtedly been due to the strong and broad foundation which has been laid

in the last forty years. Instead of the few poorly equipped installations which existed in 1912, there are hundreds of athletic grounds, swimming pools, gymnasia and playing fields, staffed with competent coaches and trainers, and today, here in the U.S.S.R., it is said that there are more than 25,000,000 participants. No country applies more intensively the theory of the Baron de Coubertin that a national programme of physical training and competitive sport will build stronger and healthier boys and girls and make better citizens.

In striving for victory and new records, it should never be forgotten that it was a national programme of this kind for all countries that was the main objective of the Baron de Coubertin when he initiated the campaign to revive the Olympic Games. The Games were not to be an end in themselves — they were to be the means of stimulating a broad programme of physical training and competitive sport for all youth. The aim was participation by the masses and not merely the creation of a few champions. With the expansion of industry in every country, the increased use of machinery, and the removal of workers from the fields to the factories, the need for such a programme was obvious. The more playing fields, the fewer jails, asylums and hospitals, the more self-reliance, and the less necessity of public expense for social security.

The U.S.S.R., of course, is not the only country to recognize the value of Baron de Coubertin's idea. I have just recently visited Mexico City. While there I saw the new 500 acre Ciudad Deportivo at Magdalena Mixhuca, which contains a total of 128 sport fields for fourteen different sports. It is a development of which any country might be proud. On weekends, it is used by as many as 300,000 young people. President Adolfo Lopez Mateos informed me that it has been such a huge success that other similar installations will be built not only in Mexico City but in other sections of the Republic. The Comité Deportivo Mexicano has initiated in addition to the open national championships, comprehensive national programme leading to special championships restricted to juveniles, and junior athletes, now that these facilities are available.

Scores of other countries have adopted Olympic ideas, and the growth of interest and participation in sport internationally during the 20th century has been phenomenal. We have aroused the interest of the entire civilized world. More than hundred national olympic committees subscribe to the Olympic code of fair play and good sportsmanship and are active in Olympic work. We can safely say, I believe, that the first stage of the programme of the International Olympic Committee has been finished. Now we must undertake the second stage, to consolidate our gains and to prevent the degradation of Olympic sport and

its use for ulterior purposes, contrary to Olympic principles.

From time to time there have been suggestions for changes in the organization of the Olympic Movement. In view of the tremendous progress which has been made in such a short period under the present arrangement, it would seem only prudent to scrutinize most carefully, suggestions for changes before making any alterations. Relations between the international federations, the national olympic committees, and the International Olympic Committee have never been more harmonious. In the last several years, Olympic regulations have been reviewed and amplified, so there is a thorough understanding of Olympic objectives. The dangers we face are recognized and steps are being taken to avoid them. The Olympic torch has never burned more brightly or more steadily.

One of the greatest difficulties we have is to prevent political interference with sport. Governments, knowing the great popular appeal of sport, are always tempted to try to use it as a political tool or as a political weapon. Since we have neither money nor guns, we must rely on the great force of public opinion to help us protect our fundamental principle that there must be no discrimination because of political affiliation, race or religion. I call your attention once more to the Olympic policy expressed in Circular Letter No. 194 and the accompanying statement, which seems to have met with universal approval in the Press of the world if not in all the Chancelleries.

Another danger, particularly acute because of the materialistic times in which we live, consists of the attempts to commercialize sport in one way or another, and to use it for individual profit. To continue its success, the Olympic Movement must remain a non-profit enterprise. Neither promoters, officials, nor participants should be permitted to gain any direct personal profit. We have nothing against professional sport, which, of course, is really a branch of the entertainment business and not sport at all, but the Olympic Games are not designed to be a steppingstone, or should one say an undignified catapult for a career in professional sport and we must not allow them to degenerate into such a role.

Unfortunately, Olympic principles and ideals are not thoroughly understood everywhere for the reason that the Olympic Movement has spread so widely in such a short time. Statements are made and many articles are published by individuals who have not the faintest conception of Olympic principles or the objectives of the Olympic Movement. Those who say that Olympic competitors, like soldiers, defend their country's prestige and should be placed on the national payroll, or that athletes who bring thrills to spectators by their performances, should

be paid and pensioned for their efforts, display a complete ignorance of Olympic ideas. No two words are more often misused than 'sport' and 'amateurism'. Sport is recreation, it is a pastime or a diversion, it is play, it is action for amusement, it is free, spontaneous and joyous — it is the opposite of work. Paid performers are not sportsmen, they are workers or employees. Most athletic competitions are for boys and girls, for young men and young women, and for obvious reasons they must not be given an exaggerated idea of the importance of sport. It must not be allowed to interfere with the acquisition of an education, or with the pursuit of a trade or profession. It is incidental to and must never interfere with the main business of life.

The Olympic Games are confined to amateurs. No really great results in any field have ever been accomplished except by amateurs, those who are actuated primarily by love of what they are doing and not by money. Amateurs are those who participate for love of sport, for joy of competition, for pride of excellence. They recognize that sacrifice is involved, but they are fully compensated by the immense self-satisfaction of victory, and by the adulation and the glory that comes to a champion. It has been said that Olympic amateur rules handicap those who are not wealthy. This is not true. In fifty years I have never known one boy too poor to participate in the Olympic Games; in fact, it can easily be established that 90 % of all Olympic medals have been won by poor boys.

Normal national pride is perfectly legitimate, but neither the Olympic Games nor any other sport contest can be said to indicate the superiority of one country or of one political system over another. One of the objects of the Olympic Games is to build international good will, and efforts made to

pit one nation against another in this or any other fashion, must be severely censured.

We should never lose sight of the ideal of the Golden Age, the complete man, well balanced in all departments, with a symmetrical and harmonious development of mind and body. Sport contributes to this end but it must be an avocation and not a vocation. We are not interested merely in the crowning of a few champions. On a comparative size basis, men can never compete in running and jumping, in swimming, or in other athletic activities with other more specialized animals and insects, nor is he supposed to. Our idea is not the development of athletic freaks. The Olympic ideal is the complete man.

In pursuit of our objective of the development of the complete man, perhaps we do not sufficiently stress the Fine Arts section of the Olympic programme. It is true that, at the Games of the XVII. Olympiad, our Italian friends did stage a wonderful display of Sport in History and in Art, and I am sure that, in Tokyo, the Japanese with their sensitive love of beauty will also give attention to this section of the programme. Even so, more must be done, in my opinion. Perhaps we should give each participating country an hour to display some interesting cultural activity of which it is specially proud. This need not be a competition but merely a demonstration or exhibition of gymnastics, music, opera, ballet, theatre, folk dances, or some other activity.

On behalf of the International Olympic Committee, I wish to thank the Olympic Committee of the U.S.S.R. for its invitation to hold our 59th Session in the Capital of its interesting country, and I am sure our members will leave with many good memories of Russian hospitality.

An extract of the minutes of the Session will appear in our next edition.