

## *African politics and Olympics*

It is not for us to enter any political dispute concerning the situation in Africa. Whether we like it or whether we deplore it, we are however forced to a certain extent to take notice of it. If we leave others to draw their own conclusions in the case of South Africa, where racial discrimination is involved, we must admit that, in spite of everything,

the problem will figure in the Agenda of the International Olympic Committee at the Baden-Baden session. There is no doubt that, in the case of South Africa, the policy of the present regime can only lead to disaster. The ideology which inspires its leaders can only end in bloodshed, which is to be deplored. If the Olympic Committee of South Africa, which has always maintained excellent relations with those who direct world Olympics, is not involved, it is because it has always been ready to receive coloured men into its organization. This has been proved beyond any doubt, and it must be stated emphatically that this committee has no freedom of action or initiative, because it also is subject to the laws of its country.

It is quite a different matter in Portugal. Although the Security Council of the United Nations has invited this country to recognize immediately the right of the people in the territories administered by Portugal in Africa to auto-determination and independence, the Black Continent continues its diplomatic offensive. The anti-colonialist and anti-racial resolutions taken at Addis-Abeba have been very quickly acted upon. South Africa and Portugal have become the targets of the African States, who are supported by a large majority in a third of the countries of the world. The offensive is growing everywhere, and even in Olympic circles, as we shall see. It would be a mistake however to place the ideologies of Lisbon and of Pretoria on the same level. The Portuguese do not expound the superiority of the white race and they even try in their own way to integrate the black and the white races with a view to creating a multi-racial society on the Brazilian pattern. The South Africans on the other hand declare the black race to be inferior, and in the name of a pretended biological and unchanging superiority of the white race have no intention of giving up their position to the black race who are in the majority.

On July 31st last, Mr. R.S. Alexander, member of the International Olympic Committee for Kenya, sent a letter to the Chancellery in Lausanne. In this letter, he stated that, on July 30th, the Prime Minister of Kenya, Mr. Kenyatta, informed him that his Government had definitely decided to refuse entry into Kenya to all those coming from South Africa and Portugal for the session of the International Olympic Committee and for the meetings of the national olympic committees scheduled for October in Nairobi. This decision, Mr. Alexander was obliged to add, was taken in accordance with the resolution passed by the organization for African unity at Addis-Abeba several weeks ago. In spite of the energetic intervention of the Governor of Kenya and of the member of the International Olympic Committee, the Prime Minister and his colleagues would not agree to any modification of this decision. The sentiments all over Africa with regard to South Africa are so strong,

that all attempts at mediation would be useless.

South Africa has a man of great integrity as member of the International Olympic Committee, a man both objective and loyal, who has been much esteemed by his colleagues since 1946, the year of his election. It is hard to understand why this man should be prevented from taking part in the Nairobi session. It is a singular — and regrettable — event in the history of the International Olympic Committee. The problem of racial discrimination in South Africa will figure in the Agenda, as we have already stated, but one wonders how it could be resolved in the absence of representatives from this country. It is to be noted on the other hand that a team of coloured athletes from South Africa, who have just competed in Great Britain and Ireland, were issued with passports by the South African Government.

As to the Portuguese Olympic Committee, which is also touched by this decision which is essentially political and anti-colonialist, it is regrettable that the delegates of this same Portuguese Olympic Committee are prevented from taking part in the deliberations in Nairobi.

The matter rests there for the moment, as the *Gazette de Lausanne* has said, but one wonders if the African countries are not going a little too far in the matter of irritating Western public opinion, which is still very favourably disposed towards their cause.

As to the International Olympic Committee, it suffers from the repercussions of this situation, and it possesses no means of effectively countering this intrusion of politics into sport. However, it has just created a Commission of International Aid, destined as its name implies, to help the new African States administer themselves in the world of sport and Olympics, and for this purpose it is ready to furnish the essentials. Other wider projects are still to be studied at the very centre of this Commission. However, in another sense, this commission sees its efforts and its hopes, which are supported by the International Olympic Committee, sabotaged by those whom it seeks to help! Who can give the answer to this paradox?

Let us not forget that racial prejudice is nothing but an instrument designed to establish in those countries which practise it an ideology only too well understood and well co-ordinated. As for us, if we have always been in opposition to racial discrimination, it is not only by conviction, or because we are on the side of our coloured brothers, but also because this principle is imposed upon us by the first article of the Olympic Charter drawn up by Baron de Coubertin.

By way of conclusion, we would like to quote from a speech made in the very country which harbours the seat of the International Olympic Committee, which was made by the Federal Councillor, Mr. Roger Bon-

vin, himself a former president of the Swiss Skiing Federation. In speaking of Europe — and by that also of the whole world — he declared: 'What forces should be put into action to bring about the unity of this body so as to help its divers members? This unified body should be itself, should respect everyone, and we should all unite to help each other and allow in all discussions as much weight to the opinions of the small States as to the big. We should be able to think differently and yet have the desire to complement each other and to strive for the common good. This would allow each one

of us to be renewed in spirit, to continue in time and space and to benefit the best that is in us, the supplement of the soul, of which we have so great a need.'

Inspired by these words, we would add that it is precisely these principles, to which the Olympic movement is devoted, that the International Olympic Committee would like to see applied all over the world.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *These lines were written when the Session was supposed to be held in Nairobi. Later on it was transferred to Baden-Baden.*