

Propaganda and nationalism two eternal enemies

by FREDERIC SCHLATTER

Considered from time immemorial as a proof of health, strength and energy, sport has always been a temptation to politicians anxious to fascinate or subjugate the masses. In giving privileges and also sometimes transient honours to the Olympic champions, the Greeks of long ago already knew how to use sport for non-sporting ends ; they were the forerunners of the great masters of 'State sport'.

ALAS ! THIS INSTRUMENT EXISTS

Human nature not having changed, let us not be very surprised that present-day politicians also use sport and its champions for propaganda purposes. It is their normal means of recovering the expenses incurred on behalf of the health of the people and for national glory.

Obviously the exploitation of sport for political ends among peoples subject to a totalitarian government is more evident than among the others. Hitler's Germany, Fascist Italy, Militarist Japan have demonstrated this only too well. However, sport is used everywhere as an instrument for nationalism ; only the circumstances and methods vary.

UNITY

Now this use of sport for political and nationalistic ends is, since de Coubertin revived the Olympic Games, in conflict with the strong tendency to make of sport a means of contact between nations. This contact should be more frequent more widespread and more fruitful, so that all kinds-and conditions of men may learn to appreciate and understand one another better.

This higher mission for sport is separated from the multiplicity of human relations and helped by the unending progress made in improving means of transport and communication. In this domaine, however, the human spirit has not kept pace with the progress of the machine. For half the twentieth century, men of all races have certainly adopted the habit of rubbing elbows in all the four corners of the globe. If it is true that the aeroplane, the telephone, the telegraph, radio and television as well as the cinema strengthen ties in a rapidly shrinking world, it is unfortunately not the case that individuals and peoples understand one another sufficiently to build a more

understanding human race. On the contrary, subjects for disagreement and ill-temper are never lacking!

It is therefore essential to consider sport — for the very reason of its great force of attraction — as a definite power for good in improved international contacts. It is no less necessary as well to denounce without fear or favour whatever tends to create a negative element of wounded pride and misunderstanding, whether in deeds or in words.

THE EXPLOSIVE ELEMENT

Three principal events have up to now marked the 'reign' of Mr. Avery Brundage at the head of the International Olympic Committee. In 1956, the truce negotiated in Hungary was due to the intervention of the Chancellery of the International Olympic Committee in favour of the Magyar athletes who were going to the Melbourne Games at that time of bloodshed so well remembered. Again in 1958, the People's Republic of China withdrew from the Olympic world and from the international sporting organizations because its rulers could not admit that Formosa was a sovereign State. Finally, in February 1963, there was the placing of Indonesia in Olympic 'quarantine' for having been guilty of political and religious discrimination on the occasion of the Asiatic regional Games.

In these three cases mentioned, international sport has indeed been bedevilled by political doubt and uncertainty. The courageous 'excommunication', pronounced against Indonesia, in 1963, shows clearly for the first time the intention of the International Olympic Committee to act against discrimination. There is no doubt that certain sporting organizations are guilty of this — notably in regional Games — to the detri-

ment of the whole Olympic ideal. The upholders of sport used for political purposes and of discrimination are not by any means representative. Proof of this is the present outcry about a project originating, it appears, from the President of Indonesia, Dr. Sukarno, and which consists very simply in organizing in the manner of the Olympic Games 'The Games of the Emergency Forces' or 'The New-Born Forces' — the exact title is immaterial.

SPORT — A PUPPET

It is not exactly clear to what heights the people will rise where their doctrines and their anti-imperialist ideas are learned at their mother's knees. It is only if they are able to dissociate themselves from their political labels that they can hope to work out a plan on an international level. Humanly speaking it is hardly possible that they will succeed so long as their politicians, with their followers and their gangs pull the strings of this puppet of sport, which looms so large, and which is an enemy of true sport. Subtle reasons have already been put forward as to why this new bogey-man called 'Ganefo' should be considered a real menace to the Olympic Games. This is exaggeration and also implies a very narrow conception of the Olympic ideal.

If it is now part of the plan of the non-Olympic countries to amuse themselves in making their own experiments, these plans will not go very far. In opposing attempts of this kind, the International Olympic Committee may even be able to prove that sport has quite another purpose than that of being the servant of politics. But to maintain this purpose, the International Olympic Committee must clearly show its intention to keep sport free of those influences which are outside its proper sphere.