

Is the Olympic Spirit in danger?

by *Frederic Schlatter*.

Why throw such a spanner in the works when the Games are in full swing ?

It must indeed be thrown because the celebration of the great sports events in 1964 cannot hide the fact that the Olympic Games and their future depend on the Olympic spirit, and that the defence of this Olympic spirit, which is important to us all, is a matter for eternal vigilance.

The Olympic citadel, (that is to say the International Olympic Committee), was subjected to two attacks during 1963. It can even be considered that the year 1963 will be a landmark in the history of world sport.

One of the battering rams which struck at its doors was none other than the attack flying the flag of UNESCO itself, whose Director General, Mr. Rene Maheu, at a recent meeting, suggested substituting for the rather superior conception of amateurism, (of which Mr. Avery Brundage, the President of the International Olympic Committee, is the

staunch champion), a sporting spirit, — fair play if you prefer — an idea more flexible and supple, but also less precise. The clarification would always be difficult, since it is true that in all that concerns the sporting spirit, each race and each racial group, if not each people proclaims its own concept of truth — which is not necessarily that of the next man. We shall return to the subject because it is worth our consideration.

In so far as it affects the Olympic spirit the sports faction of UNESCO does not threaten the principle : it suggests a solution which keeps all the ideology inherent in its service to sport.

The same cannot be said of the other attack against Olympics, in 1963, and which, on the contrary, deviates seriously from Coubertin's ideal. This assault was made by those who call themselves the *emerging forces* and which represent in fact a dangerous deviation in sport.

In writing this it must be made clear that it is, in no-way, a question here of either criticizing or minimising the inevitable evolution, both necessary and natural, of these peoples who were, and still are, under the sway of colonialism. The author of these lines has himself lived in the Far East at the period now called *Father's colonialism*. With the passage of time, he has always admitted with sincere and whole-hearted sympathy the stirring of conscience of these people, their thirst for independence and their desire to be the sole masters of their fate.

That having been said, one is in a much better position to affirm plainly that the movement called the *emerging* forces of sport and their expression which was demonstrated at the recent 'Ganefo' Games at Jakarta, were only an attempt to divide sport for political ends and to arraign the two worlds one against the other. The results obtained from a sporting point of view were entirely of secondary importance. The 'Ganefo' Games were a typical illustration of an infiltration into sport of destructive political elements. Mr. Soekarno, the President of Indonesia, (and consequently a politician before all else), did not even try to hide his intention. Speaking at a preliminary meeting, he said outright : 'Now since we can speak freely, sport has some relation to politics. Indonesia proposes now to mix sport and politics.'

This utterance — and many others — sound disgraceful in the ears of all those who, having lived through half a century of death; destruction and bloodshed, are deeply conscious that sport, whether one is of it or not, performs a humanitarian duty and increases the possibilities of contact between peoples, and above all between the young people of the world.

In addition the fact that we find ourselves well and truly up against a manoeuvre which is clearly anti-Olympic is proved by the case of Red China, (which has been out of the Olympic Movement for many years for motives which are purely political), and who has largely contributed to the establishment of 'Ganefo'.

We well know the origin of this double dealing which the politicians, mad for power, like to represent as the reaction of peoples, formerly colonized, against their former masters. It had its origin in the religious and political discrimination of the 4th Asiatic Games which were celebrated in 1962 in Jakarta. This discrimination was — and this is the worst feature — a rejection of that liberty which is claimed by the *Emerging Forces*. Under specious pretexts, in reality coldly calculated ones, the Indonesian organizers of the Asiatic Games refused the inclusion of Israel and of Nationalist China. Thus is found once more, making a mockery of sport, the all too familiar anti-semitism on the one hand and on the other the political opposition between *Capitalists* and *Communists*. These two opposing forces or antagonisms, which the Olympic spirit had partially succeeding in eradicating in its own particular sphere, have at least been lessened. Confronted with such an undermining of its dearest principles, the International Olympic Committee could no longer allow itself to sit on the fence without completely losing face, as the Orientals say. It therefore withdrew its moral support from the Asiatic Games, then its Executive Board suspended an Indonesian Olympic Committee, (Ind. O.C.), which had just given proof of its dependence on a political theory which was utterly unsportsmanlike !

The Indonesian Olympic Committee in imitation of Communist China withdrew from the Olympic world and the President of the Indonesian Republic, making the quarrel a personal one; produced the 'Ganefo', which is the abbreviation of the Games of the New Emerging Forces.

For world Olympics it tends both to divide and to produce two movements, one in opposition to the other. The political harmony of 'Ganefo' is — and we are under no illusions — sufficiently skilful and well-organized to produce a break, the effect of which will have repercussions 'in the world for many decades. It seems then that the International Olympic Committee has no greater nor more urgent a problem than to consider this particular one during the 4-year Olympiad which begins in 1964.