

The International Olympic Committee intervenes with the N.A.T.O. Authorities

During the first six months of 1964, the International Olympic Committee made contact with the Foreign Ministers of the United States, Great Britain and France. The matter in question had to do with a request for visas for those taking part in sports competitions in N.A.T.O. countries. We do not intend to publish here the texts of the letters addressed to the International Olympic Committee by 17 international federations concerning the difficulties which these organizations have encountered during the past few years in organizing world championships, European championships and international congresses. The Sports Press Association, which is also recognized by the International Olympic Committee, associated itself with this appeal. Finally a document of more than 20 printed pages was addressed to the N.A.T.O. Authorities. It should be remembered that the International Olympic Committee had already approached the Inter-Allied Bureau for movement control of the Tripartite Commission in West Berlin in April 1962. This letter was published in our Bulletin No. 79, and the problem had already been discussed in our edition No. 78. We publish below the introductory letter which was sent to the Ministers mentioned above. The complete file was also sent to the members of the International Olympic Committee, the International Federations and to the National Olympic Committees.

In addition, we give below the list of the 17 International Federations supporting the International Olympic Committee in their effort.

Athletics, Rowing, Basketball, Boxing, Canoeing, Cycling, Fencing, Football, Gymnastics, Weightlifting, Ice Hockey, Judo, Wrestling, Modern Pentathlon, Ski-ing, Shooting, archery.

Lausanne, January 1964

Sir,

The International Olympic Committee has the honour to submit herewith a file of papers concerning the situation created in International Sport by the embargo laid on East German sportsmen by NATO.

The file includes the following documents:

The correspondence exchanged between the International Olympic Committee and the Allied Travel Bureau in West Berlin;

Details of the difficulties encountered by 17 International Sports Federations in the course of the organization of several championships and meetings;

The recommendation adopted by the International Association of the Sporting Press, the Olympic standing of which is recognized by our organization.

We appeal to your high authority in the name of international goodwill and friendship, which is the basis of our activity, and also in the name of the principle of non-discrimination, whether it be political, racial or religious.

On more than thirty occasions in the past four years these principles were imperilled

when East German Sports Delegations were refused the necessary documents to obtain entry visas to the countries staging competitions, which by all the rights of sport they were entitled to attend.

In consequence, not only the spirit but also the organization of these events was upset by those political elements which Sport seeks above all to avoid. Situations such as these have led several International Sports Federations to choose only those countries which are not members of NATO as the venue of their European and World championships and meetings.

It is considered that:

- (a) the practice of sport and its purpose, which is the holding of competitions, is the business of individuals and not of political institutions;
- (b) amateur sport aims solely at better understanding and friendship between sportsmen under the universal symbol of free effort and healthy competition;
- (c) sport is now universally considered as a part of education, and as such ranks among creative human activities.

It is admitted that the Allied Travel Bureau allows exceptions on humanitarian and commercial grounds when granting travel documents to East Germans.

The International Olympic Committee, in its own name and in the name of the International Sports Federations, earnestly requests you to use your authority so that sport – non-political in essence – be considered as such. We therefore ask that in future nothing should stand in the way of the participation of East German sports delegations, which would include athletes, officials and sporting Press representatives, in the international sporting events which may be organized by any one of the NATO countries.

In making these requests the International Olympic Committee would like to make it clear that it has no intention of interfering in matters which are none of its concern, but as the chief authority on international sport it asks that Sport be also included among those exceptions admitted by the Allied Travel Bureau in favour of East Germans.

Thanking you for the attention that we know you will give to this matter, We have the honour to be, Sir,

Your Obedient Servants,

International Olympic Committee

Avery Brundage, President.

Otto Mayer, Chancellor.