

## Olympic Movement gaining momentum

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Not so long ago there was a brief note in the press: 'The International Athletic Federation (IAAF), after approving the candidatures of Dahomei, Guinea, Nigeria, the Ivory

Coast, Aden and Lybia, has a membership of 126 countries. At the moment it is the most numerous sporting organization in the world.' Athletics have done well indeed, to open wide their doors to the youth of every country in the world.

We immediately checked the last Bulletin of the International Olympic Committee, finding that the number of National Olympic Committees recognized by the International Olympic Committee was 115. Frankly said, being slightly prejudiced in favour of Olympism, this comparison came as a surprise to me.

There is a difference between the membership of a certain sport in the respective International Federation, and National Olympic Committee membership in the International Olympic Committee. The National Olympic Committee notion is related to international experience and a somewhat allround development of sports in a certain country. Under this conception there aren't everywhere objective conditions for setting up a National Olympic Committee, whereas the independent progress of a certain sport is quite possible even where the sport movement is, generally speaking, still in its elementary stage. For this reason, membership in the respective International Federation is considered more easily justified than membership in the International Olympic Committee: That is one aspect of the question, but there is another side to it too.

The most characteristic mark of the Olympic Games is their international character. Pierre de Coubertin's underlying idea — that the Games should promote physical culture and good friendship among all peoples through sport — is what distinguishes them above all from the Games in ancient days. This basic thought has in fact helped formulate the Olympic principles and ideals.

It would be right to say that the world of sports has advanced far beyond the original contention. Today the Olympic Movement has become truly international both in scope and in its essential content. But we believe that the time is now ripe for Olympism to be given a broader definition, so that it can grow, into a real world-wide movement. Only a little step forward, one more effort, is necessary to achieve the desired success.

Instead of considering whether a country is worthy of International Olympic Committee membership by the criteria of internal organization and international Olympic experience, wouldn't it be more appropriate, under actual conditions if the International Olympic Committee granted quick recognition to National Olympic Committees of countries which have just crossed the threshold of freedom, in order to promote in this way the development of sports and acquisition of olympic experience within their borders.

This would be a slight deviation from former practice, but, in the existing international climate, it would do much towards the

expansion and consolidation of the Olympic ideals. The International Olympic Committee is anyway doing much to promote the development of sport on the Afro-Asian continent. Acceptance of their National Olympic Committees as members of the International Olympic Committee would be entirely in the spirit of the International Olympic Committee Commission (the CAIO) for rendering assistance to African and Asian countries lagging behind in the field of sport.

The popularity of the Olympic Games is so great, that to take part in them is the cherished ambition of every sportsman and a stimulus to the entire growing generation, no matter how inexperienced in international sporting life.

The argument that more participants will burden the already complex organization of the Games hardly differs from the argument so often used against the tendency to broaden the Olympic programme. Much has been said for and against this view. Maybe some of its adherents respect the old proverb that foresight makes for good leadership. In the concrete case foresight seems to be expressed in the fear that the Olympic Games might one day crumble under their own weight, and so justify the attempt to restrict their growth. We wonder if such 'foresight' has rightly assessed all factors.

Life has made such progress in our times, that it would not be realistic at all to apply the 1896 yardstick. Even standards valid until the Second World War are now badly outdated. The development of the Olympic Games is fully in keeping with the astounding technical progress and higher material potentials of the modern world. When placed in the scales and weighed against the International Olympic Committee principles for the development of physical education and sport in every country and the upbringing of world youth in the best Olympic traditions — the argument against the numerical increase of participants loses much of its weight.

The Olympic Movement has been rapidly gaining momentum and the family of Olympic nations has grown. These are facts that should inspire all true adherents of Olympism. The International Olympic Committee has done very much in this respect. Only a little step forward, one more effort is needed.