

Editorial

"There is no greater honour than to win a medal for one's country in the Olympic Games".

"They train me like a racehorse, but at 32 I'll be on old-age pension..."

These two statements are taken from an English film that is worth seeing. Above the social problem "The Loneliness of the long distance Runner" sets the problem of free will, of choice, which, in the end, alone determines the preferment or retrogression of the individual in that reality that is his life. Colin Smith, a delinquent more through chance than character, shows undeniable athletic prowess shortly after arriving at a Borstal institution. The governor, enthusiastic about sports, is all the more happy to realize this since there is a cup to be won in an inter-schools cross-country race, in which his "school" will participate for the first time. Colin's training is urged on, he is granted favours as well as being given promises about an early discharge, a future, a career. "If you play ball with us, we'll play ball with you" is heard on several occasions. The young man soon feels himself to be something of a sham before his friends, less lucky than he because less gifted, more aggressive because treated more severely. Nevertheless, he runs ; every day, better and better, for the fun of it, to escape from within those walls and be with nature. "You can win that cup. You must win that cup". And when D-day arrives, and victory is within reach, he turns it down and lets himself be beaten by his opponent from the nearby college, within 15 feet or so from the finishing line, in an apparently absurd defiance. Flouted, his masters will at last "reform" him...

We have said that this film involves fields above sport, upbringing or class problems. It is the story of a boy who, with his limited means — a refusal — calls in question for us the ways and means of these three human conceptions. He

understands that so-called social promotion (of which competitive sport is claimed to be one of the surest guarantees) does not solve everything if the one promoted does not change in stature, that man's finality does not reside in increased material comfort but in his inner accomplishment; he highlights the weakness of our best intentions — to what extent are the ambitions we cherish for others not the reflexions of our own fancies ? When he is already winning, and running towards the finishing line he will soon disdain to cross, Colin grasps in a flash that he is an object, and not a subject, for those who acclaim him, that the rhythm of his heart is much more important for his educators than what that heart seeks. And he says no.

He says no to ease, no to that opportunity more imposed on him than offered by the governor greedy for prestige, no to the illusion of being great because fleet of foot, no to that bargain ("Play ball with us, and we..."), no to forsaking those who cannot play it, this game, with whom it will not be played since they have only their limits in p/ace of talent, no to those runs at dawn, no to that glory just glimpsed, no to a premature pension... This no thrown in the face of those who have not understood is in fact a yes he gives to himself and which confers on him his true dignity.

From a letter we value all the more since it comes from the doyen of the International Olympic Committee, Mr. G. D. Sondhi, we extract the following : "The trouble is that many want victory and not sportsmanship. And they are not content with this : people who condemn unsportsmanship are victimized and called un-national, if not worse."

Colin Smith will pay dearly for his crime and his liberty. Yet, he will perhaps have given us something to think about.

Editor.